

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Volume 25 : Number One : Spring 2004

25th Anniversary

SPECIAL ISSUE: TOWARDS HEALING OUR CHURCH

A Survivor's Story

Pastoral Reflections on Child Sexual Abuse

Transforming Memory

Spiritual Healing

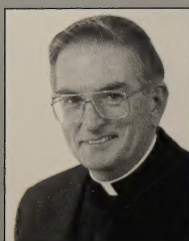
Boys' Tears in Men's Eyes

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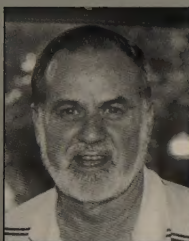
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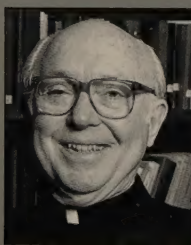
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JAMES J. GILL, S.J., M.D., a priest and psychiatrist, died peacefully on July 29, 2003, after a courageous battle with prostate and bone cancer.

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EDITOR'S PAGE

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Manuscripts are received with the understanding that they have not been previously published and are not currently under consideration elsewhere. Feature articles should be limited to 4,500 words (15 double-spaced pages), with no more than 6 recommended readings; filler items of between 500 and 1,000 words will be considered. All accepted material is subject to editing.

Authors are responsible for the completeness and accuracy of proper names in both text and bibliography. Acknowledgments must be given when substantial material is quoted from other publications. Provide author name(s), title of article, title of journal or book, volume number, page(s), month and year, and publisher's permission to use material.

Letters are welcome and will be published as space permits and at the discretion of the editors. Such communications should not exceed 600 words and are subject to editing.

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Editor's Page

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF FATHER JAMES J. GILL, S.J., M.D.

With this issue we begin the twenty-fifth volume of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, fittingly enough dedicated to the memory of our founder, James J. Gill, S.J., M.D. A farsighted man, ordained in 1957, before the Second Vatican Council was even a dream, he asked his superiors to allow him to study medicine in order to become a psychiatrist. At that time psychiatry and psychology were viewed with no little suspicion in some church circles. Yet Jim believed that religion and psychiatry needed one another in order that people the world over might move toward what Heraclitus called the "glory of God," namely, humanity fully alive. Jim called it "full human development." In the beginning of his apostolate as a priest-psychiatrist he found himself invited all over the world to give talks and conferences on the interface of religion and psychology to bishops, religious superiors, men and women doing formation work in their religious congregations and seminaries and people of many walks of life who felt that they needed wise counsel on such matters. His love for travel met a worldwide need, but he could not respond to all the requests. In true Jesuit style he discerned the signs of the times and his own resources and decided that the best way to meet the demands he was experiencing and to reach the most people was to found a quarterly magazine.

Twenty-five years later his dream continues to flourish. Jim wrote in the inaugural issue that the magazine would try to help people who were forming others for their roles in the life of the church "to gain enough theoretical knowledge and the basic skills to enable them to act effectively in ways that will (1) foster full human development, (2) identify incipient emotional illness, and (3) secure appropriate and adequate treatment when this is required." That the church still needs such a magazine testifies to Jim's prophetic vision. We are proud to dedicate this twenty-fifth anniversary issue to the memory of that great pioneer, Jim Gill, S.J., M.D.

We wondered what shape to give this inaugural issue of the twenty-fifth anniversary. In June 2003 I was invited to a meeting organized by the Archdiocese of Boston's Office of Healing and Assistance to try to develop guidelines for helping survivors of clergy sexual abuse. Those invited included survivors, pastoral workers, spiritual directors, psychologists and psychiatrists. At the end of the meeting I asked Jim

Sullivan, one of the survivors, if he would allow publication of his story in HUMAN DEVELOPMENT. He readily agreed. Subsequently, when I met with Barbara Thorp and Bob McMackin of the Office of Healing and Assistance to discuss follow-up, the idea of an issue of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT dedicated to the healing of survivors of sexual abuse was floated. It seemed to Executive Editor Linda Amadeo and me that this would be a fitting subject for this anniversary issue because it brings together theoretical and practical knowledge. We hope it will help many in our church to understand the trauma suffered by those who have been sexually abused by clergy or by anyone and to respond appropriately to enhance the healing that is needed not only by survivors, but also by all of us who have suffered through this terrible ordeal.

By the time this issue reaches our readers, the John Jay Study of clergy sexual abuse commissioned by the United States bishops will have been published, and many of us in the church may feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the numbers of those abused. Surely, if he had lived, Jim Gill would have wanted to address this crisis in the pages of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT. We have taken our cue from his willingness to grasp the nettle of difficult issues and yet to do so in an irenic spirit that aims to heal and to foster full human development.

I was deeply touched at the two meetings organized by the Office of Healing and Assistance by the profound desire of survivors of sexual abuse and of members of their families to do everything they could to bring about healing, not only in themselves, but in the church, and also to try to ensure that such abuses do not occur in the future. I was not the only one at these meetings who wept, even sobbed, to hear the stories and the courage of these men and women. Almost as impressive was the compassion and care shown by the priests, psychiatrists, social workers and psychologists who give of their time and talent to help the people of God in this time of suffering. There is immense goodwill and expertise in our church that needs to be tapped so that the survivors and their families can continue to move toward healing and that the institutional church can be healed of whatever structural faults may have been instrumental in bringing about this great wound to our body and soul. In the EDITOR'S PAGE of the last two issues I have urged us all to listen to other voices in order to widen our imaginations and thus to provide better pastoral and theological care to the

people of God. These meetings broadened my imagination. I hope that this issue will do the same for our readers.

Now let me introduce this issue and its authors. The first task for all of us is to listen to the voices of those who have been abused. They are the innocent victims who have borne terrible pain for many years. We are immensely grateful to Melissa Smith (a pseudonym), Jim Sullivan and Slávka Michančová for their bravery in writing about the sexual abuse they suffered and its effects. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT was put in touch with Ms. Smith who agreed to contribute her story, a task she undertook with

much fear and trembling and no little trust in the editors of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT and its readers. As noted, I asked Mr. Sullivan to write his article because I found his presentation so compelling and well articulated. The article by Ms. Michančová, who was sexually abused by older cousins, came unsolicited, like a gift from heaven, while we were preparing this issue. She articulates a theological and pastoral approach to help and healing and also widens our perspective. Sexual abuse occurs all over the world, and the perpetrators are most often members of the victims' families. In the words of these survivors readers can feel the profound pain caused by sexual abuse no matter who the perpetrator is and can also marvel at the grace of God and the strength of the desire for wholeness in these three people. They point out helpful and hurtful responses from members of the church. All three show how the abuse deeply affected their relationship with God. Their stories throw light on the more theoretical and pastoral offerings that follow.

Robert McMackin and Terence Keane, psychologists who have worked with survivors of violence and sexual abuse in a variety of settings, give us an overview of what is known about the effects of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and about its psychological treatment. They point out that those who have suffered from state torture and those who have been sexually abused by clergy show some similar characteristics, indicating how devastating to one's trust in life itself are these abuses. Joseph Guido, O.P., a priest and psychologist, reminds all of us that the survivors of clergy

sexual abuse are just a small number of those who have been sexually abused. The latter, too, are members of our parishes and religious communities. He believes that the church can take this moment of crisis to help all survivors of sexual abuse and their families to come to healing and hope. This crisis is an opportunity as well as a calamity.

Anne Francis, a laywoman, writes about the disruption in her relationship with God brought on by the crisis in the church and points out the need to engage in that relationship with God directly in order to gain some perspective on the crisis. In my article I try to explain the psychological dynamics of the spiritual devastation caused by sexual abuse, especially if the perpetrator is a member of the clergy. I also give some pointers on how to help people who have been traumatized, to let God heal them and make them more whole. Barbara Thorp and I offer some pastoral suggestions and approaches that can be helpful to survivors. Some of these suggestions can be followed by anyone in the church.

James Torrens, S.J., with his poetic skill and pastoral heart, helps us to be aware of the pain suffered by everyone in the church and, as usual, points us to the only One who can heal, console and enlighten us.

The issue concludes with a short annotated bibliography assembled by a member of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT's Editorial Board, Gerard J. McGlone, S.J., a clinical psychologist who is doing research on the healing of survivors of clergy sexual abuse.

We have changed our format, but not our content, for the benefit of our readers as we enter our twenty-fifth year. I hope you find it helpful. We give thanks to all who have helped bring HUMAN DEVELOPMENT to its twenty-fifth birthday. We are proud to dedicate this issue to Jim.

William A. Barry, S.J., Ph.D.
Editor-in-Chief

Bill Barry S.J.

A SURVIVOR'S Story

Melissa Smith



The author's name is a pseudonym. She wants to remain anonymous to protect her family and herself. We have changed identifying characteristics in order to maintain her anonymity. The account is a true one.

I write this account of what happened to me in order to help others. I want to do whatever I can to prevent such abuse of others. I also want to help people in ministry in the church to have a felt understanding of the effects of such abuse so that they can be alert to the pastoral needs of those who have been abused. I ask that you read this article with an open heart, as I pray that I may find the language to convey to you my message.

From the time I was a little girl, I knew that I was loved. I remember loving God and feeling loved by him. Having been a sickly child, I had known the loving devotion of family, especially of my father. God was with me as a constant companion, a friend. I felt a warmth that was God's presence inside of me. I loved God; I loved life and because of these truths, I loved people. My life was centered around the church. I sang in the choir, helped clean the sacristy and took responsibility for the many tasks that needed to be done. The sights, smells and sounds of the church made me feel like I was home. The music made my heart feel God's life within me. I devoured books about the saints. I also loved being with younger children. Perhaps I would enter a teaching order of sisters and use the gifts God gave me in service for others. Years later, I tried to fulfill that earlier dream, but I could not. I came to realize that I didn't fit in. Not only did I sense that God did not want me, but also that I did not experience God in the same way as I once had. God had become distant, cold and unforgiving. There was an aching, gaping hole that had once been his love inside me. The loneliness was unbearable at times.

As a thirteen-year-old seventh grader, I was outgoing and popular, a good student, a musician and very happy. That summer I met a young, energetic priest, Father X, who took a special interest in me and my family. He told me that he knew right away that there was something special about me. He was so interesting and smart, and he loved music.

Next year I entered a Catholic high school. It was a great place to be. In fact, my first report card showed no adjustment issues. Shortly after Thanksgiving, Father X asked me to help him with a project with other kids. I thought that he had a great idea and joined enthusiastically. One evening as we were working together in the group, he inched closer to me so that his body was touching mine. His leg was touching my leg, and when we finished he put his hand on my thigh. He then thanked me by putting his arms around me and holding me tight to him.

Shortly thereafter, he took me to another church for an Advent service. On the way home, we stopped at a pond after having gotten something to eat. Again, I remember him talking to me and rubbing his hand up and down my leg. Although I didn't know why, I felt not just uncomfortable but fearful. During this time, I began to experience nightmares. I feared going to school and remember calling my father often from school and begging him to come and take me home. He worked nights, and when he would arrive home, I would frequently be awake crying. Many nights he would hold me until I could go to sleep. Although he asked about school and friends, I couldn't really verbalize what was wrong. During Christmas vacation, my father asked Father X if he could help me, perhaps talk to me. My father respected Father X and trusted him.

When I went to the rectory a few evenings later to meet with Father X, he told me that we were going for a ride. This was the beginning. For a year and a half, he would take me for rides at night. He frequently took me to his bedroom in the rectory, mostly in the evenings. During these outings, he would often play classical music and touch me. There would be hugs and massages, and then rubbing my legs and sliding his hand between them. I remember being held in his study so tightly that I thought I would burst, trying to move away, but not being strong enough. I know now that the hardness I felt was his erection. I wasn't freed until he had ejaculated. Riding home one day, he put my head on his lap and did the same thing.

I became his companion. Sometimes there was nothing but silence; other times he would tell me about his family. He told me how his mother wanted him to become a priest. He thought mothers tried to exert way too much control over their children. He even thought that my mother would never

understand why we spent so much time together. It would be better if my parents thought that it was all connected to our church work together. Several times he spoke to me about what boys told him about me. I was so embarrassed. Later, when I was an adult, he would often tell me about the sexual exploits of the eighth or ninth graders. This only served to shame me more. Although I was very uncomfortable, I could never tell him.

He frequently invited me to dinner with friends of his. Most of the time I felt awkward and out of place, but I did whatever he wanted because I both feared and loved him. My discomfort could be pushed aside because Father X seemed closer to God than anyone I knew. He fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick and imprisoned and gave away what he had. Father X knew God. There were times of pleasure for me as well. Father X took me to concerts and the theater. He bought me presents to cultivate my cultural interests. We went to expensive restaurants, and there seemed to be nothing he would not do for me.

Shortly before my sixteenth birthday, he drove me to an empty parking lot. One minute, he was talking about stars that he wanted me to see. When I leaned over, he pushed me down on the seat of the station wagon. My head hit the window, and I was lying in an uncomfortable position. I tried to get up, but the weight of his body wouldn't allow it. At the same time, he was covering my mouth. He pulled at my clothes. I struggled for a moment, and then just remember going limp. I closed my eyes. He raped

me. Then he put his hands around my neck, shook me and called me a "bitch" and a "dirty whore."

I don't remember anything else until we were on our way back home, when there were silent tears streaming down my face. He looked at me and said, "What would your father say, if he knew what you had just done?" I felt sure that my father would be so ashamed, just as ashamed as I felt. Shortly after that, Father X changed toward me. I was no longer the special one, or his favorite. I was so confused. This was the same man who had told me that Jesus cured and healed through the gift of touch. He was the same man who told me that touching was a good thing, a gift from God. He had even told me that if he could marry anyone I would be the one. Everyone looked up to him and thought him almost saintly. There was no doubt in my mind how evil I was. Father X radiated goodness and charisma, and I radiated pure evil. There was something terribly wrong with me.

The next several years, I continued to work in the parish with Father X, and a different relationship began. Over time, that year and a half became boxed off from the new relationship that continued. Through the rest of high school and

Everyone looked up to him and thought him almost saintly. There was no doubt in my mind how evil I was. Father X radiated goodness and charisma, and I radiated pure evil. There was something terribly wrong with me.

college, I never connected my irrational behavior to this. I wanted to know that he still loved me in some way; I wanted to know that I could make up for doing the things I had done.

I came to feel that God barely tolerated my existence. For that matter, I could barely tolerate my existence. How could I have betrayed God? For someone who knew such love, how could I have committed such sin? My goal in life became to survive. In order to survive and to do what I thought was required to be tolerated by God, I shut down emotionally. Feelings were not to be trusted. I no longer understood or trusted what love was. Not just human love, but the divine love for which we are all made and for which we are all destined. I found that God's love could not be trusted, and that although I had once known a forgiving God, that God no longer existed for me.

By relying on my intellect, I learned to live with an appearance of normalcy. Of course, through the years the stress would slip out in the form of anorexia, bulimia, migraines, paralyzing fear, reckless and erratic behavior, excessive alcohol and other patterns of self-destruction. Throughout it all, my family and I maintained a relationship with Father X. He never recognized the damage he had done to me. Although he remained close to all family events, he never seemed to notice that he had sucked the life out of me and left me emotionally and spiritually dead.

His hands had not just been on my body, they were all over my life. College life was difficult, dating most difficult. What were the expectations? What was right or wrong? Adult male figures in power or authority were intimidating. How could I relate to them? During this time these and other thoughts swirled around in my confused mind. After all, it was never clear what I owed them. It seemed that they had a right to me. Their rights and expectations were what mattered. Everyone had rights but me; I had none. My thoughts, wishes and feelings didn't matter. Father X taught me that. Life was so unpredictable and so stressful. I became almost exclusive, shunning most people for a few trustworthy childhood friends. Parties and social occasions were nearly impossible. I never knew what the expectations would be. So, I studied, came home on weekends, worked in church and did little else. Often I would call my father and plead with him to come and see me during the week. He never failed me. I only wish I could have had the words to explain what was wrong. If only I could have put it together for him. Yet, what would I have become in my father's eyes? I believe that he truly loved me. I know he knew something was very wrong. Would he be angry with me or with Father X? What could happen to Father X? It was all too confusing to think about. So I boxed it and put it on a shelf in my head. I never wanted to think about it, but it was always there.

When I graduated from college, Father X gave me a job which I worked excessive hours. Working seven days a

week became exhausting. My father was not happy with the schedule I was keeping. I was becoming sick and losing weight. He desperately wanted to know what hold Father X had over me. I still could not explain; I didn't understand. Again, I didn't want to think. All of it had been my fault; I knew it was my fault, and I needed to work hard to make up for what I had done. Maybe Father X counted on that. He may have counted on my relationship with children as well. It seemed at that time that I could still feel something for children. Many times, I was the only other adult accompanying ten-to-fifteen-year-old boys and girls on trips with Father X. Although I may have resembled an adult, in his eyes and in mine I was always still a fourteen-year-old girl.

When my father died, any semblance of life Father X had left inside of me died. I was twenty-three, but Father X still had a hold on me and got me to help him even when I began a different job. But it was during this time that I began to live a very reckless life. To everyone who had known me I appeared the same. My regular job and working for the church took up a great deal of my time. Few knew the secret destructive life that I was leading. I drank heavily and spent money as quickly as I made it. Through this recklessness, I had an incredible ability to put on a different face, more like a mask, to hide my inner self. I remember being confused and disgusted. My life was out of control. I despaired of the presence of God's love. The relationship that had once been so precious to me was far from a priority. I knew what I was doing was wrong. There is no one else to blame. I let it happen. More than anything I wanted the emptiness to go away; I wanted to fill the aching hole. I continued to serve the church, but I could not receive Eucharist. One day, as I sped down a highway going about ninety miles an hour, my car went out of control. I thought, "Maybe this is it; it's finally over." Believe it or not I was very calm. Amazingly, the car jumped the guard rail and hit a tree, but I was untouched.

Shortly thereafter, as a last resort, I turned to God to help me gain control over my life. I admitted that somehow life had gone terribly wrong, that this was not who I wanted to be. If somehow God could save me from myself, I would do anything. I sensed God heard my cry. As terrified as I was, I felt that God was holding out for me a choice: a destructive road of my own making, or another road of his making. I closed my eyes, took a breath and jumped. For the first time in almost twenty years, there was a measure of peace.

The passion, the warmth, the light, the spark I had known as the God within me had not returned, but perhaps God was present in this peace. Even if I could never know God again in the intimate way that I had, I would know his peace. I knew I deserved punishment for having turned away God. I rationalized that this was the penance I would do on earth. Never feeling the warmth, but knowing God was present in the peace, at least, made me feel half alive. In time I came to trust this peace, trust it so much that I was willing

to date a man initially and then marry him. My husband has been a form of salvation in my life, helping me to continue to trust the sense of God's peace in my life. He was and still is, a good, kind and gentle man. More than anything he expects nothing from me; there is no payment due. His love is so different from what I knew.

When my first child was born, I was initially overjoyed, but something was desperately wrong. I noticed it in the hospital. There was no joy, no excitement, no love... nothing. As I held my son and tried to be a loving mother, the ache inside me worsened. The wants of an infant can be so demanding; I guess that without maternal feelings they become overwhelming. How could I explain this to anyone? Again, I received the grace to work out an alternative. My education prepared me to know what children needed, to some extent. If I could not feel it, I could at least act as if I did. I set out to be the perfect mother. I looked around, figured out what a "good" mother would do and then did it. Fear for my baby's safety, however, ruled my life. I felt that I had to be with him constantly, protecting him, keeping him out of danger, not out of love but out of fear. Protecting him twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week was exhausting, but I was determined not to let God down again. I had been entrusted with this life; I couldn't fail. Many nights I couldn't sleep without putting him in my deceased father's care for the night.

I gave birth to two other children. After the second I knew that there was something missing, but I had learned to adapt. The presence of colic in this child for a lengthy period did not elicit feelings of empathy. However, my sheer determination not to fail God again pushed me to the limits of my endurance. I felt that I was no longer worthy of God's attention, and this purgatory was my penance. By the time my last child was born, I felt peace in knowing, at least, that I was trying to lead a good life.

When we truly, deeply and unselfishly are able to love and allow ourselves to be loved unconditionally, we are able for a time to connect with the divine love of God. In fact, we come to know God through this unconditional love. However, when love itself is distorted and perverted, God becomes distorted, and love can neither be identified, nor felt. The one pure emotion that connects us to the One who loved us first becomes simply unattainable. Even those in our lives with whom this bond should exist naturally and automatically cannot be trusted. Discovering people's underlying motives and how they plan to manipulate you is how you survive. Imagine how lonely life is when no one can be trusted! Imagine not even being able to trust God or yourself!

A few years ago I heard about an abusive relationship Father X had with another child, a boy. Suddenly, I was fourteen again. My life fell apart, the chaos was back, and the blessed peace was gone. The symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder took over. Driving alone at night could cause me suddenly to pull off the road and begin screaming. The

sights, smells and lights of the church, which had once been so comforting, became a torture chamber. The hands of a priest, a black suit, a particular song or a reading would trigger a very painful memory. Once at a school I passed a classroom where a magician was performing. I saw only his hands and his black suit; I flew out of the building in fear and had to go home. My life was crumbling around me. My husband would find me in the corner of the house curled up in a ball sobbing. It was obvious that I needed help. I also needed to speak to someone at the bishop's office. At that time I spoke with a priest who was extremely kind, but I did not trust him enough to tell him my story. The little I did tell him was on condition that it not be written down. Father X had friends, and I was certain that he would find out I had been there.

With help from the diocese and my primary care physician, I was put in the care of a wonderful psychiatrist. Through seeing him on a weekly basis for two years I was able to come to some acceptance of the twisted relationship I had with Father X. I was able to come off the anti-depressants and begin seeing the psychiatrist just twice a month.

Finally, through therapy, I began to trust that perhaps my children did love me, and that I did love them not for what they accomplished but for who they were. Finally to feel love, real unconditional love, for my three children was a monumental step in my life. When they hug me, when they tell me about their lives, when they fail, when they succeed, as imperfect as I am, I know that I have touched something of God's love. Many nights when I say goodnight to them, I cry because I am grateful to feel the love, but also I feel the loss at what I've missed. I will never have that back. Being able to be a good and loving wife is sometimes still difficult. Learning how to communicate as an adult, learning to trust my husband enough to feel that I have the right to disagree and the right to say no, has not been an easy journey. Those who have supported me and helped me by listening, by allowing me to talk for hours, by being there no matter when I have called, no matter how irrational I may sound, have helped me stay connected. These people have held me together with wires and strings. They have been church. They have responded with compassion, empathy and strength when I have had none.

What caused me the most unspeakable agony, however, was the loss of trust in a loving and forgiving God. From this relationship stems all others. To be able to remember what I once had, and then lost, has been gut-wrenching to me and has set me at odds with the church, its leaders, its priests and even its people. The anger and the sadness that surge inside when I feel like an outsider because of a thoughtless comment from a parishioner, a priest, a bishop, or a cardinal become overwhelming. I only know how to search for God as a Catholic. I don't know how to be anything else. I was baptized, received Penance, Eucharist and Confirmation before I was ever touched by Father X. Yet many times I feel like an outcast. If only I and others like me would go away, the

church could move on. When words like these are spoken, it adds to my feelings of worthlessness. After all, maybe everyone else can move on. My life is forever changed and so unstable. Spiritually, where do I come home, if everyone else is moving forward?

I feel a lack of understanding, compassion and empathy that seems to permeate the church, through its people. There is an us-and-them mentality, which has the effect of putting me on the outside looking in. When a cardinal makes a statement indicating that the abuse of a fourteen-year-old girl is substantially different from the abuse of a younger child, it's as if I've been stabbed in the heart. I am that fourteen-year-old girl. A priest stares at me blankly when I tell him I'm a victim. His silence makes the shame more acute. I'm not worth his time, and it's obvious how uncomfortable I have just made him. When a parishioner complains about "these people," I am powerless again. Life becomes a heavy weight.

When the abuse scandal broke nationally in 2002, my life was thrown into chaos again. I relived my relationship with Father X. All of the symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder returned. Peace was gone, and I was hanging on by a thread. I found out that I had not been the only one abused by Father X. Realizing that I had not been the only one or even only one of a few was heartbreaking. Could I have prevented the abuse of others? I also began to worry about my confidentiality in the diocese in which I live. Again, I was not in control of my own life. Fortunately, I was blessed to trust a priest with my story, who instinctively knew that I needed even more than what a psychiatrist could offer. This priest, Father A, has been able to pick up where my psychiatrist readily admits he cannot go. There are some wounds that only God, and Christ working through his people and his church, can heal. Not only has Father A spoken to me tirelessly of God's love, but he alone has offered me healing through the sacraments. Last spring there were times when I believed I could not go on. I actually thought that driving my car into a brick wall would be better than living this daily hell. To think of my husband trying to bring up our children alone, and what their lives would be like, stopped me many times from taking those steps. Father A used his priesthood to offer me healing. His humility, his holiness, his sincerity and his honest desire to help allowed me to accept what I probably would not have accepted from anyone else.

Words cannot describe some of the experiences that I have had through the sacraments of Penance and of the Eucharist. On several occasions I have felt protected from the piercing pain of betrayal, almost as if a bubble cushioned me from the outside. There has been a peace and a warmth that

flooded my senses and allowed me to go on. I pray daily for the gift to love and trust God as I once did. I know that, although I have come far, I still have a long way to go. Yet, I also know that God is so worth this struggle.

During the past year, it has been an enormous challenge to remain in the church. Father A, my husband, children, another priest who is a longtime family friend and several laymen and laywomen have been the wires, strings and glue that have anchored me to the church. Through their commitment, compassion, empathy and genuine concern they have led me through a difficult time. Their leadership has come from humble service and a desire to see me as worthy of their time and effort, even when it has been inconvenient,

painful and tiring. All have apologized in one form or another for what has happened; none have walked away, and none have suggested that we or I "move on."

In offering me spiritual guidance, and particularly the sacraments, Father A has opened a channel for me that I thought was closed forever. There are singular

moments now when I feel God's love. For now I live for these moments. In addition to experiencing it through the Sacrament of the Sick, I have also felt it through Penance. When the guilt, shame, anger, frustration and emptiness become too much, I rid myself of it all through this sacrament. Sometimes at home I wrap myself in an afghan made by some friends as a wedding gift. The warmth of this afghan reminds me of God's love. I am profoundly moved. I have felt moments of great love for my children and know that God is present. The wounds are deep, and the need is great for spiritual healing, as well as for the obvious emotional healing.

I pray daily for the bishops of the church. They hold the positions of formal leadership and so must lead. I beg them not to lead with their heads but with their hearts. May they allow compassion and empathy to rule their decisions and remember that we are their baptized brothers and sisters. Although I can only speak for myself, I feel all of us need the healing that only our church can offer. It is demeaning and degrading to have to beg for the church's attention and the healing that can only come from bishops and priests because of their clerical state. When I was a child, and got hurt playing, or my feelings were hurt, I went home. All of us want to go home where we feel we are understood, and our wounds will be healed, and we will feel comfort. It seems as if bishops and priests don't know how to love us, what to do, how to care. Speaking for myself, I just want to be home again. Many times I feel as if I'm on a battlefield. I want my spiritual family to understand, to feel my pain and isolation. I want them to strengthen and nourish me so that I can go back outside and love again. Maybe someday, someone else in this family will need me, and I'll be strong enough to respond.

Recognizing that God was present in the many people he placed along the way has brought me great comfort. Without those people, I would not be here today.

In January 2003, when I had an opportunity to speak with my bishop, this is where my story ended. When I finished speaking, he apologized for the church and called me a woman of faith. I felt that I had failed to communicate that what I had lost was my ability to love. As St. Paul so eloquently says, "I may have all the faith to move mountains — but if I have no love, I am nothing." The relationship with Father X caused me to lose the ability or capacity to know and to feel love. Most importantly, I could not love God, and I could not feel God's love for me.

Shortly after my meeting with the bishop, for no apparent reason, for a second or two, I did feel it. From deep within me, there was a spontaneous emotional response to God. It was as I had remembered it. It is an encompassing love that is expressed and received in silence; it is an internal awareness. It is that love that allows us to go beyond ourselves. Without that love we are all like ships dragging anchor, no matter how many prayers we say and how many good works we do. With that love we are able to soar; our hearts are alive; life has meaning, and we are energized.

Those moments were fleeting during that winter, but I recognized that some connection was being made. Then, during Lent, I participated in a retreat program. I never spoke at the meetings, but I began to realize how abandoned I had felt by God. I began to acknowledge that I was heartbroken and even angry that God did not seem to care. I also began to understand that God wanted me to know him through the person of Christ. Up until the time I was molested, my sense of God, my relationship with God was to the Father. My own father had been so wonderful, and so aware of God in his life, that I think it was a natural transference. When I was molested, and gospel stories were used to explain touching and sexual love, I guess I had no desire to know Jesus. During the Easter season, I came to realize that Jesus was my way back to the Father. God let himself be known through the compassion, understanding, forgiveness and love of the Son. Suddenly, I had the bridge I needed to approach God again. Just as in the story of Adam and Eve, I had been hiding from God in shame. Through Jesus there was finally a connection with God. No longer was God an intellectual exercise. God was living deep within me, and my

ability to love God and feel God's love was alive. There is no way to express adequately the joy I felt and still feel.

Sometime in June 2003, I was finally able to put my life in God's hands again. After thirty-four years I could trust God enough to give him my life. From about the time of my First Communion until I was age fourteen and eight months, I had been in the habit of giving my life to God every day. Finally, I had been graced by God in such a way that I could trust him again. Sometimes I am overwhelmed with the loving presence of God within. Often I wish that I could hold more of God within me.

There are still demons to be confronted and challenges ahead. But, most times, I feel in control of my own life and of my ability to choose God. Most times I am invigorated by the love I hold within me, and thus am able to offer my life in service to those who are in need. When painful memories are triggered, and I find myself reliving the past and letting it interfere with my relationship with God, I ask Father A for help. Although my natural instinct is to avoid God and to avoid people during these times, I know that doing so will pull me away from the love I so desperately need. Instead of hiding from God, I try to spend more time seeking him out.

Before the age of fourteen I felt loved by God and others. In return I was able to love God and love others. Something terrible happened to me, and for thirty-four years, my life became a journey to survive. My separation from God almost killed me, emotionally and physically. Maybe I will always have the flashbacks, the nightmares, the anxiety and other symptoms to remind me of what was, but I now have great hope for what may be. Feeling God's presence in my life, as I once did, feeling my own love and desire for God, gives me amazing strength and peace. Knowing that I have that life within me gives me courage to face the challenges that I must face. Recognizing that God was present in the many people he placed along the way has brought me great comfort. Without those people, I would not be here today. Knowing people like them has helped me to understand that there are people in our church who do care. Most importantly, receiving the Sacraments from Father A, meeting Jesus in this way has become vital and necessary to me. Father A's compassion and sense of priestly humility bound in service have helped me to realize that I am not alone, that I can belong and that I am not an outcast from my spiritual family. Sometimes life is difficult, and I wish that God would call me home to rest in his arms forever. However, I must accept that my life is seen through God's eyes, and my time here is determined by God's time. While I finish my work here on earth, however, God has given me the church to be my home, and his people to be my family. It seems that after many, many years, I know what it feels like to be coming home, and with tears of joy and gratitude, I find myself walking through the doors, putting everything down and saying, "I'm home!"

Into the Fire *of Hope*

Jim Sullivan

Over the past few years there has been a tsunami-size swell of media bringing to light the stories of many of us who were sexually abused by the clergy. Consequently, an unanticipated shift has occurred in the mindset of the church hierarchy brought about by what some may argue is the fortitude, tenacity and courage of many survivors and, I suggest, by the courage displayed by some members of the media in forcing open the church's almost impenetrable walls of silence, denial and avoidance.

The cover-up of not only the painful truth of sexual abuse by members of the clergy, but, as importantly, the leadership's unwillingness to date to implement far-reaching corrective measures to address these crimes, continues to endanger the safety of our children and calls into doubt the entire system of how the leaders of the church form, supervise and protect the transgressors at the expense of innocent clergy, parishioners and family members.

Another aspect of this tragedy are the priests, nuns and brothers suffering in silence who themselves were abused by trusted superiors and who, to this day, have limited confidential sources to which they can turn. They, like the lay survivors, need pastoral care and unfettered access to healing and reconciliation measures. But, most of all, I believe, they, like us, want to see the institutional church forthrightly and expeditiously address, acknowledge and correct the systemic problems that are apparent throughout the organization.

I believe the church has arrived at a critical crossroad. The stewards of the church will either come to terms with the full, unedited reality of and seriousness of their responsibility in the perpetration of these heinous crimes, their cover-up and their long-term effects, or an implosion of members' continued participation in the church may result. I suggest that a system of checks and balances, including lay participation, should be devised and implemented to ensure the safety of our children and adolescents.



I am one of the fortunate ones who have struggled and attained a degree of healing and reconciliation with themselves, their families and their God.

I was moved to write this article by the hope that by acknowledging my personal experience of betrayal and sexual abuse by a member of the clergy, and having found a path to healing, I might be an encouraging voice to others who continue to suffer in screaming silence. I hope that one day each one of our stories will come into the light and that our voices will finally be heard. My story is written to shine a light on one person's spiritual devastation and yet, just as importantly, to bring hope by acknowledging my eventual resurrection from the ashes of the deep despair I experienced in a faraway desert not of my own creation. My story is a journey of debilitating pain, tormenting isolation and tumultuous confusion and yet, by God's good grace, it is a journey that has led to a formulation of a deeper, more mature and reordered faith that includes a growing sense of relative peace and personal transformation. And, yes, despite the ambivalences and partial measures on the part of the church to bring about reconciliation, my story and my struggles continue, as do my spiritual journey and the development of my renewed faith in God.

I was given the opportunity to tell my story to a committee convened in Boston to address the growing need for pastoral care for survivors and their family members who experienced the ravages of clergy sexual abuse. With some trepidation, lingering doubt and yet with a sliver of hope, I agreed to address the conference. Speaking at that conference and writing this article reflect, I believe, a positive step in my journey back to a growing trust in myself, my God, my family and, hopefully over time, to an eventual reconciliation with a more open and grounded Catholic church for all to experience.

In preparing to write this article I had no idea how painful it would be once again to put my feelings into words as I called on the complicated and deep-seated emotions that well up inside me whenever I revisit the subject of my sexual abuse. And yet, as I told my story at the Boston conference, I finally had the sense that my voice was being heard by the bishop and others in positions of authority within the church. It is my hope and my prayer that the insti-

tutional church will finally have the courage to take the time necessary to reflect on its actions and non-actions and that it will recognize its need for policy change at its very core. It is only through the full exposure of truth that the church will have the opportunity to cultivate an honest and open relationship with its past and present members and that survivors can once again come to trust in God and the church. Thus, together we can work toward mutual understanding and a healing mission through a program of partnership in providing pastoral care.

As a survivor, I have lived with a deep-seated anger for as long as I can remember, and it remains with me every day and probably will for some time to come. What I wasn't able to understand was the true nature and genesis of this anger. When in early 2002 the stories of sexual abuse by priests began to break in the *Boston Globe* and in *The New York Times*, particularly the stories of abuse in my own city of Boston and the controversy surrounding the response, or lack of response by Cardinal Law, this anger rose up inside me like an erupting volcano that had lain dormant for years. It became a tremendous force spewing from inside me in ways I could not have predicted. I was barely able to control my response. Through the help and support of a few trusted friends, accompanied by a new level of work with my therapist, I was able to find my voice and take the chance to stand up and finally be heard after all these years.

I am a survivor, that's true, but really I look at myself as a person who, with God's help, has gotten on with his life the best he was able. I am one of the fortunate ones who have struggled and attained a degree of healing and reconciliation with themselves, their families and their God. I do not suggest the struggle is over. Quite the contrary. I do not believe the struggle will be over until the church has fully accepted responsibility for its part in this shameful chapter of deceit and betrayal. It will also not be over until all of those who have been harmed can once again come into the light and tell their stories free from the guilt and the fear of further rejection and retribution. Most of all, it will not be over until all those, including family members of those abused, find their way back to a changed church.

The hard truth for me, and I suggest for many others, is that my anger was rooted in the cries of a young boy who was betrayed and manipulated and violated not by a stranger, but by a member of his family. In our home priests were not just people from church; they were part of our extended family. They were regular guests in our home and often stayed overnight. The abuse that I experienced occurred during my critical formation years at age twelve and thirteen.

Looking back, it is now easy for me to see how the experiences changed my perspective on life. I went from being an outward-looking, hopeful, trusting boy to an inward-looking, suspicious boy who over time became increasingly emotionally shut off from family, peers and people in positions of

authority. I grew to become emotionally fractured; no longer did I trust those whom I had held in great esteem, including our parish priests, and who held positions of high respect, power and authority. I pulled back from trusting my parents, who had placed me in a position of vulnerability in which a more trust and parental protection was violated as they unknowingly and unsuspectingly exposed me to predators. I became a secret-keeper, afraid to tell my story because of fear that I would not be believed or, worse yet, that it was my fault. This fear and secret-keeping have permeated my existence throughout my life. Worst of all, in addition to my experience of violation at the parish rectory, my home became an unsafe place. Nighttime entries into my bedroom, and violations in the room of one of my brothers by priests, who would attempt to fondle us, became a dark secret of shame for both my brother and me, as I was to discover only in the past year when he told me his stories of abuse.

To this day I have an emotional reaction when I cross the threshold of my childhood home in Milton. I tense up, sometimes feeling sick to my stomach, fairly quickly upon entering the house; I become withdrawn and uncommunicative in the presence of my parents. For years I didn't put the pieces together. It took pain, tears, support and a great deal of prayer and spiritual development work to figure it all out and understand why I was so shut down. In my business dealings I was outgoing, gregarious and well-spoken. It has been difficult for me to reconcile the fractured behavior.

The effects of the abuse created deep wounds in my psyche that I have carried with me into every relationship, personal and business. Sad to say, the effects of the abuse are still evident in my still distrusting relationship with my now elderly parents. True forgiveness and healing are something that I have striven to attain for years, and I will continue my attempts at complete forgiveness. I recognize that holding on to my anger is self-defeating and debilitating.

This now brings me to another aspect of the abuse, that is, the effect on other family members. My parents were stunned when I told them about the abuse I had experienced. They were further devastated to learn of my older brother's abuse. Feelings of betrayal and anger engulfed my parents very quickly. They nearly drowned in their confusion, anger, betrayal and helplessness. I am grateful to report that Bishop Lennon, the apostolic administrator appointed when Cardinal Law resigned, kindly agreed to visit and spend time with my parents. Bishop Lennon, on behalf of the church and the diocese, accepted responsibility for the crimes committed in their home and to their children. The result has been the start of the healing process for my par-

ents. Although my brother remains emotionally isolated and is visibly oozing pain from the reality of how his life has been colored by his experiences, a healing of sorts has finally begun to take place between us.

Another casualty of the abuse was my relationship with God. After the abuse, my connection to God was severed. I could not believe that God would allow his appointed representatives to visit such crimes on unsuspecting children. At the time, the experiences called into question everything I had learned about and expected from a loving Creator God. Many will recall that in the early sixties, the God of our understanding was at times pretty wrathful and visited his

punishment only upon those who deserved it. Was the abuse I suffered God's response to me? Of course not, but as a boy in formation, I didn't know what to believe and, worse yet, I wasn't able to ask for help. I decided that, if God and my parents couldn't protect me, then I would need to find a way to protect myself. I did. I proceeded to button up my emotions, and at

the earliest opportunity I would find a way to escape my childhood home. When I was fifteen, that opportunity presented itself. I was invited into a fledgling job in the music business. It started me on the road to self-sufficiency and self-knowledge and allowed me to gain a new identity and a new story so as to facilitate my moving on with my life. By nineteen, I had been recruited to work at a company in Los Angeles; from there I moved to New York, and then to England for several years. Anyway, the point is self-evident: For my own survival I needed to move as far away as I could from the scenes of the crimes. From a career perspective I have had a great many domestic and international successes. But, even with my success, the distance I traveled on the outside unfortunately did not distance me from my insides. The inside pain continued to haunt me for years to come.

If we are to understand what lies at the core of an abuse survivor's experience, we must grasp that more significant than the immediacy of the violation and the betrayal is the horrible fact that the real damage remains invisible to the outside world. In most cases it even becomes repressed in the victims themselves out of shame or guilt or just by the simple inability to express a hurt that is beyond words. I can now name the sinful crime for what it is. It is the total betrayal of trust and loss of safety and security. Most of all, it is the fact that in the violation my ability to be open to loving and trusting others was perverted and turned on its head to the point where my emotions and my heart and soul shut down as a way to protect me from being totally destroyed in the process.

The psychic wound runs deep and, even after many years, it has never completely healed. Like a long-suffered

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infection that cannot be tamed, I continued to exhibit the destructive byproducts of this toxic invasion. Over time I began to doubt myself and to wonder why relationship after relationship failed miserably. Time and again I would be left with a deep feeling of emptiness, loss and self-loathing. I began to engage in patterns of self-destructive behavior, and I found outlets to dull the pain and fill the void. Worse yet, I grew into almost total isolation. Over time I became a walking zombie, emotionally and spiritually dead to the world...trusting no one and feeling very little — good or bad.

Twenty years ago my life took an unexpected turn. God did for me what I could not do for myself. I had struggled for years to try to kill the pain of childhood memories. The cure I employed nearly killed me. The emotional, spiritual and physical isolation became destructive and brought me face-to-face with my internal demons. For whatever reason, twenty years ago God allowed me to experience his grace as he pulled me out of my own emotional abyss.

Through the years I have tried to reconnect and find healing with my family and the church. Over the past fifteen years I offered service as a Eucharistic minister, taught CCD, visited the sick and counseled families in crises, all in the attempt to experience a true reconnection to my childhood church. Through it all I continued to struggle internally, not knowing how I could truly tame the demons of the past. I felt tremendously torn. I felt at times that I was two different people. A split in my inner personality was taking shape, a dangerous partition of internal adjustments to the conflict I was experiencing by trying to find my own personal reconciliation with the church. I was searching for inner peace but encountering only inner conflict.

Over time, I managed, with a great deal of help, not so much to tame the demons, as to become conscious of them and friendly with them so as ultimately to disempower them. Subsequently, I have learned to live with all of my past experiences, recognizing that these experiences are a part of who I am. All that I have experienced is a part of who I am today. Over the past twenty years I have come to understand, through God's grace, therapy and a very strong twelve-step program, that there is a way to deal with the hurt, a pathway to build trusting relationships and to find a way to open up truly to another person and to allow God's grace to flow through me as I attempt to be a channel for his work. Through my personal commitment to find answers to what has made me the way that I am, I have spent many hours, days and weeks on retreats, in reflection, journaling and utilizing a myriad of powerful healing tools. I felt I had come a great distance in my healing journey. In fact I had.

My point is that the effects of the abuse do not remain contained within the victim. The abuse becomes, like alcoholism or any other addiction or disease, a family story of emotional and sometimes physical and spiritual isolation and devastation.

But, that said, I wasn't prepared for my deep internal reaction when the news broke publicly about the extent of sexual abuse by some of the clergy. I was certainly not prepared for the wellspring of anger that was ripped loose inside me when the church's response was one of denial and fortress-like mentality. I felt that the internal work that I had undertaken was threatened and was almost derailed when my anger nearly got the better of me. I am thankful that the work that I had done, the recreating of a personal relationship with a loving, forgiving God from the ashes of my brokenness stood me in good stead. Through the cacophony of our cries for recognition, for truth and for justice, I was able to respond and stand up and fight with a voice of reason for myself, my family and the still voiceless victims that needed to be heard.

Central to my processing of these experiences and my reaction to them has been the creating of a support system in which I can address my deepest fears without being judged. This support mechanism, a men's group that I have now been a part of for more than nineteen years, has seen me through many difficult times. It is a spiritual and healing model that might be worth exporting to address survivors of abuse — both men and women.

But, before I address spiritual, emotional and physical healing, because abuse is a three-fold sword that cuts deeply into a person's psyche, it is important for me to talk about the effect abuse has on families. The code of silence that I grew up with did not serve any of our family members well. In my opinion, it only helped to perpetuate the dishonesty and the secrets. Once sexual or any type of abuse is introduced and experienced by a family member, each and every person in the unit is affected, whether overtly or covertly. Anger is expressed in unexpected ways and at the most inappropriate times to unsuspecting family members. Certainly, that has been the case in my family. I can clearly see where a wedge was inserted between me and other family members as a direct result of the abuse and a broken trust. As an example, I was deprived of further counsel on life issues through my mistrust. Family members were subsequently deprived of my involvement — by my lack of emotional and/or physical presence. The unfortunate part is that there was no mechanism in place to address the pain, confusion and inner turmoil. I was not able, nor was my brother able, to put words to my inner feelings of despair and desperation and to cry out for help.

My point is that the effects of the abuse do not remain contained within the victim. The abuse becomes, like alcoholism or any other addiction or disease, a family story of

emotional and sometimes physical and spiritual isolation and devastation. It is necessary that the services that are offered to survivors be adapted and offered to survivors' family members as well. Many will not be willing to participate, but I believe that over time, if we as survivors can experience reconciliation and healing in our own broken lives, healing will eventually begin to be exported to incorporate other family members as well.

For myself, and for so many others, I ask that we dedicate ourselves to ensuring that this story has a hopeful ending. To fail to address this reality openly and honestly and not provide real hope of reconciliation to survivors is to fail in a most basic way to live up to our core beliefs. We all have a responsibility to reach out and offer hope where it doesn't yet exist. But, this cannot be done in isolation from the bigger reality — that of responsibility for harm done.

Ultimately, I believe, it is up to each of us to find healing in our own way. There is a systemic problem within the church that needs to be openly addressed, with help from the outside, before the church can hold itself up as the healing force it desires to be. Right now, it is still a problem. In some quarters, the church is still acting out of an institutional self-defense rather than opening up and becoming willing to look inward and address the need for change.

In thinking about my own healing and the opportunity for pastoral services to be offered, I suggest we consider a model that I experienced during my time in South Africa. Using the model of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation committee might be interesting to consider. Some of the criminals of apartheid, who perpetrated hideous crimes, came forth and asked forgiveness from surviving victims directly and/or from victims whose family members had been murdered. It is something approaching this level, followed by internal changes and exhibits of substantially modified behavior as shown by individual clergy and the institutional church, that might eventually restore some sense of trust in both.

The examples I put forth — the Truth and Reconciliation model, group meetings that can be facilitated by professionals in non-church locations and family support services — are but a few steps that might be considered. Whichever model is adapted and implemented, I strongly believe a so-called "Chinese wall" between the means chosen and the church is necessary. The church can be of assistance, through something like Boston's Office of Pastoral Support and Outreach, by securing meeting space, resources and pastoral care from trusted third-party professionals. It would be self-defeating if the church's agenda is evident in any forum that is created. I speak from personal experience when I emphasize that survivors need a safe space to meet and share their stories without fear of judgment or of confidences being broken. In addition, it would probably help to have clergy and survivors invited to share their stories. But, I stress, at no time

To fail to address this reality openly and honestly and not provide real hope of reconciliation to survivors is to fail in a most basic way to live up to our core beliefs.

can these groups be influenced to fulfill someone else's agenda. If there were any hint of the church being self-serving, any credibility that is gained would be lost immediately.

In addition, understanding the realities of insurance and legal liability, I can tell you that it would help me if a small group of the clergy abusers agreed to meet with survivors — in a controlled environment — to take responsibility for their actions. By hearing our stories they might really come to understand the horrific and life-affecting consequences of their actions. It might possibly contribute to the healing process if those who were invited to hear our stories could concretely demonstrate what they have done to take responsibility and how they have changed their lives in a demonstrably meaningful way, if indeed they have. Again, I believe it would be important for some of the offenders to listen to our stories and possibly come to understand the damage that was caused and the struggle that we have experienced to once again gain a solid footing in life.

Eventually, I can envision a partnership between survivors and abusers, in which, once trust is gained (if that's possible), they can go out as a team and try to bring a message of hope and reconciliation to the greater community.

At some point Christ's message of love and forgiveness needs to find its way into a dialogue of communication and mutual healing. But, in the meantime, survivors are best left to survivors along with third-party therapists to help find a path of healing in a safe and confidential manner.

Even with my residual anger, I recognize that I am blessed to be one of the lucky ones. I have worked very hard to create a productive life out of the ashes of betrayal and derailment at an early age. I have fought hard and invested the past several years of my life in the service of God, trying to offer a message of hope out of deep heartache. I am committed to continuing this path, but I still believe we survivors must keep a safe distance from the church until it shows itself to be worthy of our trust both as an institution and through its individual clergy members.

Pastoral Reflections on Child Sexual Abuse

Slávka Michančová



I would like to offer you not just a Christian perspective on child sexual abuse, but also my own experience of a journey with God as a person who has been deeply wounded, first by this terrible sin itself, and later by responses that were totally inappropriate. But I can also testify to having experienced the healing touch of God. Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a crime. It is from a theological point of view that I call it in this paper a “sin” because in the light of faith this is what it is.

At the age of eleven, I was repeatedly sexually abused for more than a year by two of my older cousins, one already an adult. They abused me separately, using different approaches. My parents were advised by a priest not to report it to the police in order to prevent further harm to the family. Years later, when I asked this particular priest for an explanation of his attitude, I was told that they felt that “nothing really bad happened, that we just wanted to find out what sex is like.” When I went to therapy, the psychologist tried to convince me that I must have surely been in love with my cousin if I allowed it to happen for so long. And before I got married, I expressed to another priest concerns about difficulties I might have to face in my intimate life. He simply stated: “The love of your husband will heal you.”

I am convinced that inappropriate responses arise from a lack of understanding about the whole issue of such abuse. Slovakia, as well as other Central and East-European countries, has a strong Christian tradition but suffered a lot under the past communist regime. There was a lack of freely available Christian literature. Because of this, we did not receive the full light of truth that would have enabled us to have a better attitude toward particular problems, including child sexual abuse.

Because we live in a so-called "Christian country," most the victims of child sexual abuse are Christians themselves. In order to help them in their recovery, their identity as believers cannot be ignored, as they themselves can't ignore who they are.

In fact, whether or not a person was raised on Christian foundations, everybody needs to find his or her identity in order to have meaning and purpose, as well as energy to live. However, we can understand our true identity only if we acknowledge that we were created in the image of God, who has accepted us as his beloved children. Sin, beginning with the one of Adam and Eve as described in the book of Genesis, always affects the perception of our identity as God's children who were created in his image. This touches most spiritual (and emotional) problems.

The sin of child sexual abuse overshadows a person's identity in a very tragic way. We were created by God as man or woman. Thus our sexuality is something that touches the core of our being. When somebody harms and hurts us in this area, she/he hurts a most significant part of our identity. Sexuality is intended by God to be a free gift of love and a way of participating in God's creative power in the context of marriage. But this intention is tragically corrupted by childhood sexual abuse and the painful consequences it brings to the victim's perception of the meaning of sexuality and sexual relationships. Its effects interfere with her sexual functioning as a spouse and with her ability to fully enjoy the most intimate part of marriage. She is, to a great extent, robbed of the blessing that God put into this sacramental joining of sexual union.

According to the Bible, we are a "temple of the living God" (2 Cor 6:16), and the human body is the "temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 6:19). In terms of human dignity, the sin of child sexual abuse has a tremendously devastating effect. How can one ever have a healthy relationship with God, when his "temple" has been desecrated and the person deeply wounded?

EFFECTS ON SURVIVOR'S FAITH AND RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

The faith of many victims of child sexual abuse becomes an area of a constantly painful and exhausting struggle. Their trust, as a foundation of attachment (an ability to connect and to have a bonding), has been shattered. The very basic question of a victim is: "Where was God when it happened?" or, "Is God truly a loving God if he allowed this to happen to me?" The person feels abandoned by God, who didn't intervene to protect her. One can hardly communicate with somebody one does not trust. The prayer of a victim (as a means of communication with God) is deeply affected. But no relationships can mature without communication.

There are two basic conditions for prayer: The first one is a desire to pray. But how can a person desire to commu-

The faith of many victims of child sexual abuse becomes an area of a constantly painful and exhausting struggle. Their trust, as a foundation of attachment (an ability to connect and to have a bonding), has been shattered.

nicate with somebody whom she experienced as not being trustworthy? The second condition is surrender. A person who feels she has been abandoned by God concludes that she is the one who needs to have control over her own life, an attitude that makes surrender to God if not impossible, at least very difficult.

The inability to trust God is not necessarily visible or conscious. A victim can know in her head that God is loving and trustworthy. However, she might have great difficulties in engaging in prayer and participating in a God-celebrating atmosphere, the Mass or the celebration of sacraments.

Another great obstacle in the faith life of a victim of child sexual abuse is the perception of a punishing God. Especially if a person has been abused by someone close to her, who was believed to care for her and love her, she easily concludes that the abuse must somehow be a punishment from God for something she deserves, because she is bad.

In addition, such victims, as a result of having been touched sexually in inappropriate, confusing and frightening ways, usually feel guilty, dirty, worthless and ashamed. This contributes to avoiding God (the Holy One) and to hiding from him. A consequence of this is isolation, a lack of peace often accompanied by a feeling of deep inner emptiness. Or it can be that a victim tries very hard to please God in order to deserve his love. Child sexual abuse is sometimes also at the root of one's decision to enter religious life in order to sacrifice one's life to God as an attempt to purify oneself. The person becomes restless, always doubting if she/he has done enough.

PROBLEMS ARISING FROM A WRONG PASTORAL APPROACH

The development of false images of God is further reinforced by inappropriate responses to the abuse, especially when coming from authority figures perceived as represen-

tatives of God. When adults are informed about a case of child sexual abuse, they are most often shocked. If they lack adequate understanding and try to cope with it in wrongful ways, they plant a message of blame deeply into the victim's soul — for instance, seeing the child as the one who provoked the incident; accusing her/him of not defending herself/himself enough; imputing to her or him part of the responsibility and not treating the child as a victim of abuse; not seeking the child's best interest but rather covering up for the abuser, perhaps in an effort to save the reputation of the family, etc. Such responses make victims see and feel themselves as great sinners in the eyes of God. Especially for Catholics, sins against the Sixth Commandment have long been considered to be the most serious ones. Because of this a child victim cannot get rid of profound guilt feelings: usually there is too much shame and lack of vocabulary to verbalize in the context of the Sacrament of Confession what really happened. If a victim doesn't receive the clear message, "You are not guilty!"; self-blame becomes a block for free communication with God. Victims feel far away from God and damnable. Yet our faith tells us just the opposite — a victim does not need to be forgiven by God in any case, but needs and deserves special loving care and protection, especially from those who represent God, i.e., church ministers. In the Bible, through the mouths of prophets, God repeatedly appeals to his people to save the suffering one out of the hands of the offender and to provide justice.

Another widespread source of problems, especially among Christians, is the misunderstanding of anger, often sensed as something bad, sinful, non-permissible in the eyes of God. If such a message is communicated to a victim of childhood sexual abuse, suppression or repression takes place. Anger then remains inside and negatively influences a victim's relation toward herself and others as well as toward God. Anger rightly understood is a God-given energy to protect us from danger. It is a normal and even healthy reaction to injustice. A victim of abuse has a full right to be angry, for there is so much that was hurt, lost and damaged. A victim has to know that her anger is valid and that God understands it, accepts it and even joins in it.

There is a powerful story in the Scripture where we see Jesus becoming very angry (Mt 21:12-13). Seeing the corruption which took place he "...drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. He said to them, 'It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer'; but you are making it a den of robbers.'" As mentioned above, we are called to be a temple of

the living God, a temple of the Holy Spirit. And we can be sure that God is still angry when the temple of our body is abused. The Scripture says: "Be angry but do not sin" (Eph 4:26). Seeking revenge would be a sin. But when a victim has been raised up with a false concept of anger, she finds it difficult to acknowledge and express her anger. However, the very anger is important and crucial in the healing process.

Commonly, instead of allowing a victim to deal first with anger, she is told or even pushed to forgive. Her guilt feelings might seem to confirm in her the need to forgive, but as a victim she is not able to do so, which increases the feeling of guilt. It is true that God's word asks followers of Jesus to forgive. But a victim might for a long time at the most do "only" what Christ did on the cross: he himself did not forgive "those who sinned against him" in crucifying him. He asked his Father to forgive them. What is missing in this approach of pushing victims to forgive too early is also that Jesus asked for repentance and restitution on the side of the sinner, too. But often the responsibility of the offender is forgotten or put aside and too much responsibility put on the shoulders of the victim.

Also, if we consider that the CSA victim is held captive in the impact of trauma using coping strategies to survive, we could then compare her healing journey to the "rescuing Israel out of the Egyptian captivity and leading it to the Promised Land."

Healing is a process that for many victims can be very long. True forgiveness is only possible once a victim has worked through her feelings of sadness and anger and once she has arrived at the right meaning of forgiving. God does not expect the victim to forget the traumatic event, to deny the reality of harm done and to suffer no more when facing the consequences of trauma in her life, or to behave in a way that

would openly give the offender the opportunity to continue harming. What God asks in forgiving is rather giving up the desire for revenge and letting him be a decisive judge. Forgiving is an ongoing act — not single — of taking the offender out of the victim's heart and putting him into the hands of God, who only has a right measure of justice and mercy.

Much harm can be done when Christians who are too zealous try to shorten the natural process of healing by just simply praying and nothing more. Prayer mediates blessings for a person but does not solve everything. The impact of this trauma is often wide and deep. When the self-concept (self-esteem) of the victim is shattered, it takes time to restore the identity of a beloved child of God. Also, if we consider that the victim is held captive in the impact of trauma using coping strategies to survive, we could then compare her healing journey to the rescuing of Israel from the Egyptian captivity and leading it to the Promised Land. The Promised Land was not so far away, but it took forty years to reach it because, in fact, it was much easier "to get Israel out of Egypt, than to get Egypt out of Israel." Believers need to know that healing requires much time, energy and effort as

Well as supportive accompanying. Otherwise, they will lead a victim into a spiritual confusion and undermine her self-confidence even more.

Doubtless, a person following this trauma faces suffering. The ongoing presence of this suffering necessarily evokes in the victim the need to respond to the question: Why? For believers who accept the world as created by God, the question has a theological dimension. I think that the worst message communicated to a victim of child sexual abuse is when God is presented as the one who puts purpose into human suffering, using it as a means to teach a person a life "lesson." Whereas in the case of child sexual abuse and many other atrocities, the truth is that God is absolutely against it; he only allowed it to happen because he respects the free will he once gave human beings (even offenders), and in his redeeming power he could heal the victim's wounds, restore her wholeness and give her life in abundance. In no way could the trauma be intended in God's plan. In the Bible we read, "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm" (Jer 29:11).

DO NOT PREVENT A WRONG APPROACH

As I reflected on the resurrection of Lazarus (John 11:1-44), I was touched by an interesting detail — arriving at Lazarus' village, the dead man was already in the grave. Jesus asked: "Where have you buried him?" And the story continues, "It was a cave with the stone laid across it." Jesus ordered, "Take the stone away!" As Lazarus came out, Jesus said to people, "Unbind him."

When people do not know how to respond appropriately to a victim of childhood sexual abuse, they somehow do just the opposite of what Jesus did. Because of fear, embarrassment, silence, covering up, avoiding, simplifying and by various ways of spreading false theological messages — people literally bury the victim and put her back into a cave, into isolation and darkness. Jesus wants us to take the stone away and to unbind the one who feels as though she is dead. He could have done it himself. But rather he asks us to change our attitude, to walk in light and truth and approach the victim in a way that facilitates her recovery.

To be able to do so, people need first of all to be taught about the issues of childhood sexual abuse. Here I want to emphasize that especially those who hold positions of authority in the church or in Christian denominations have particular responsibility regarding victims of such abuse. They are often asked by the victims themselves or by their caregivers for advice. They are likely viewed as models of thinking and behaving. Victims often address themselves to them hoping to receive help. Because of their position, they must be able to provide understanding and care. In order not to "bury" a deeply wounded and suffering person but to call

For the CSA victim, the reality of the resurrection promises that life will rise out of death. However, she needs to know it is not to happen in three days; rather it is a continual process.

her to life and to help her to live again, pastors and priests must acquire some special knowledge about this abuse and its consequences.

HEALING IN THE LIGHT OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

If one is to be helpful to the victim, one has to acknowledge the nature and the effects of trauma as they were identified by psychology and respect the stages of healing with the needs they cover. Thus, the Christian-oriented healing journey is based on psychological principles involved in human nature, but at the same time it transcends them.

As a Christian I have to declare God is the first healer. God who created human beings is always in action to restore our identity. After the first sin, God promised a redeemer. In Jesus Christ's death on the cross all the past, present and future sins of the world are involved, and in his resurrection there is an unending source of a healing grace for a wounded humanity. For the victim, the reality of the resurrection promises that life will rise out of death. However, she needs to know, it is not to happen in three days; rather it is a continual process.

The fact that God is the first healer also implies that human beings, however skilled, cannot heal victims by themselves. St. Paul asks, "What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?" (1Cor 4:7) God is giving us the same Holy Spirit, in whose power he sent his beloved Son "to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to comfort all who mourn" (Is 61:1-2). We can be instruments of God's powerful love and supports on her journey toward wholeness, but it is only the power of our Savior that can bring life out of what is dead in her body, mind, heart and spirit. I believe that without God a full healing cannot take place.

It must not be forgotten that in a Catholic perspective,

sacraments can be powerful instruments given to the church, where God's grace is directly offered to a person who is open to receive it. The Eucharist, the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick can bring a person the experience of an immense healing touch of God's love. Adequate prayer, as well, is a means of putting the burden of suffering into the hands of God and so to be refreshed and strengthened by his grace. Also, the Bible can be useful and effective in one's recovery journey. The word of God, a word of truth against all kinds of lies that try to cover up our identity, has a powerful message of God's promise of abundant life and becomes thus a source of hope for all who are desperate.

PART OF MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

I have studied the issues of childhood sexual abuse both in the area of theology and psychology to reach some complex and deep understandings in this regard. And I have found out that awareness is greatly important and helpful. The Bible says, "The truth will set you free" (Jn 8:32). However, this liberating power does not consist of just acknowledging the truth but rather in experiencing it. Experience makes the essence of change.

I join those who hold that one of the most powerful tools in psychotherapy is that of appropriate, safe physical touch. The therapist Paul Vereschack says, "Touch is Life. Without it, infants die, and without opening to it, and receiving it, many adults attempting deep therapy will remain in pain forever." If we consider that in accompanying the survivors of childhood sexual abuse on their healing journey we deal with the wounded inner children that are kept within the adults, how can we not embrace them?

Fortunately, on my healing journey I met a priest who had enough understanding of the needs of a wounded heart. I have spent several days in a spiritual center where he works, and during the frequent sessions with him, I was allowed to retell my story and deeply share with him my thoughts, as well as work through the very strong emotions that were stored within me. He was just gently beside me, with full respect, encouraging me not to withhold but to go on expressing myself in a way I needed. Later he celebrated with me the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick, which in our Catholic tradition is associated with healing. In order to counteract the hatred of my own body, he offered to massage my feet in connection with or right after the celebration of the sacrament. This celebration was the real milestone of my journey: I experienced God's love flowing into me in a way I had never known before. But in spite of this, all the problems did not totally and miraculously disappear at once; but the healing process entered a new phase where I have much more serenity and inner freedom. There are no short cuts in this process. A victim must walk through it step by step by herself. But it is not possible to do this alone. I'm still

accompanied while I'm also helping others.

This year, together this priest and I began to minister to adult survivors of child sexual abuse. The word "ASCEND," as this mission is titled, indicates the healing process itself as the one ascending still more and more toward full health, toward wholeness, toward God the healer, who will wipe away every tear. The weekends we lead involve both group and individual sessions. In an atmosphere of understanding, respect, confidentiality and shared Christianity, we accompany participants in expressing themselves and releasing emotions connected to the trauma survived. We have also found helpful the use of demonstrative and symbolic means of acknowledging the damage done and celebrating the process of recovery, something also described by D. F. Rogers. According to some testimonies, the celebration of the sacrament of the sick, with the washing of the feet included, provides the participant with an inner experience that lessens the feeling of guilt and that of being dirty. Explaining the theological aspect of childhood sexual abuse as I have here described it also decreased the blame level.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

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Understanding Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

Robert A. McMackin, Ed.D.,
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Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a complex, even paradoxical disorder that affects many survivors of clerical sexual abuse. Its causes include a profound betrayal of trust that gives rise to extreme emotions such as fear, helplessness or horror. Some survivors, however, have difficulty remembering key aspects of the abuse.

While some aspects of the trauma may remain hazy in the memory of a survivor, other aspects can spontaneously intrude into the person's consciousness. This disturbance is characterized by both arousal and numbness, with many individuals experiencing hyper-alertness, agitation and irritability, as well as emotional detachment, restricted affect and social isolation. An overview of PTSD and its treatment, along with an explanation of these processes, will be examined in this article as they relate to clerical sexual abuse.

INTERVIEW

Trauma exposure is a pervasive human experience. Population studies document exposure rates to major traumatic events (e.g., physical or sexual abuse, the unexpected or violent death of a loved one, criminal victimization) at about 10 percent to 60 percent, with many people having experienced multiple traumatic events in their lives. Fortunately, exposure to a traumatic event does not necessarily lead to PTSD. Of those exposed, up to 30 percent may develop the disorder, with prevalence rates in the general population documented at between 5 percent and 9 percent; thus, this disorder is the fourth most common psychiatric illness after alcoholism, major depression and social phobia.

The nature, frequency, severity and duration of the trauma directly relate to a person's response to the trauma. The more severe, directed and intimate the exposure, the greater the impact. For example, a child subjected to repeated sexual abuse by a respected and trusted priest over the course of a year may



be more deeply affected than a child whose father dies unexpectedly in a car accident. Both are clearly traumatic events, but the random, isolated quality of the accidental death may not affect the core stability of the child as profoundly as does the clerical sexual abuse.

In the past, children were thought to be less susceptible to the impact of traumatic events than adults. They were viewed as more resilient than adults and more likely to experience short-term, rather than long-term, disturbances after trauma exposure. In addition, they were expected to recover spontaneously and with time. This position was based on reports of the resiliency of English children who remained in London or who were separated from their parents during the aerial bombardments of World War II. However, quantitative studies, particularly those of Lenore Terr, M.D., who studied abducted children, underscored and highlighted the effects of traumatic events on children. It is now recognized that children are vulnerable to the effects of trauma; rather than being seen as a protective factor, the earlier the age of first exposure is now viewed as a risk factor for more severe lifetime symptoms of PTSD.

A disruption in an individual's experience of personal or psychological safety is central to the development of this disorder. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders - IV* states that traumatic exposure is a situation where "the person experienced, witnessed or was confronted with an event which involved actual or threatened death or serious injury or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others." This exposure would in turn create an intense feeling of fear, hopelessness or horror in the person. The natural response of any of us when exposed to such an experience is to seek safety, whether by diving into a foxhole, running from a burning building or seeking the solace of an understanding parent. When that safety cannot be found, the impact of the trauma multiplies. Mental health professionals consider clerical sexual abuse a serious violation that threatens the integrity of the person so exposed.

EFFECTS OF CLERICAL SEXUAL ABUSE

The field of trauma studies is in an early phase of development because PTSD was only formally recognized as a disorder in 1980. The study of the effects of clergy sexual abuse is in an even more primitive stage of understanding. In the past few years, numerous articles in the popular press identified the problem, but the professional and empirical literature remains scarce. The authors found few quantitative studies that examined the impact of clergy sexual abuse but did find some recent qualitative dissertations that explored the phenomenon.

For example, psychologist Paul Isley examined the experiences of nine men abused as children by Catholic clergy, and psychologist Kathryn Flynn conducted "narrative research" on the experience of twenty-five women abused as adults by clergy. Both studies documented the profound impact the abuse had on all survivors, with almost all subjects reporting multiple symptoms associated with PTSD. The men were abused in childhood, and all but one of them kept the abuse secret into adulthood. The women in Flynn's study were adults when they were abused. Both groups reported symptoms such as severe experiences of shame, guilt and low self-esteem, which they associated with the abuse. Most of the men abused as boys experienced in adulthood substance abuse, depression, suicidal thoughts, sexual identity confusion and compulsive sexual behavior, and reported "deep regrets" about some aspect of their lives. Flynn reports that eighteen of the twenty-five women who were sexually abused as adults by a priest felt "brainwashed and captured in the abusive relationship." That an older, educated sample, such as Flynn's, was so deeply affected by clergy sexual abuse underscores the even more profound impact of childhood abuse by clergy for both

males and females. But it must be remembered that these studies are only suggestive, not definitive.

Survivors of clerical sexual abuse often suffer alone because they cannot turn to anyone. Disclosure is not an option, and even the confessional is unavailable to those who have had this experience. Bishop Geoffrey Robinson states, "In sexual abuse there is always spiritual harm because, no matter what other particular things may be destroyed, the abuse always destroys the person's sense of wholeness and connectedness, and hence the person's sense of meaning." When a priest perpetrates the abuse there is no safety. An archetypal image of love and protection, as represented by the priest, has been violated. If the priest cannot be trusted, who then can be? Family avenues of protection and safety are typically not viable options for those exposed. Both Melissa Smith and Jim Sullivan (contributors in this issue of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT) found that they could not talk to anyone in their families, or to anyone else. The abuse is committed in private and endured in silence by a child unable to integrate the experience into his or her life and/or to look outside for help. The very ability of the victim to survive is in danger and, in fact, the rate of suicide among survivors of clergy sexual abuse appears significantly above the norm.

The family, community and parish are all influenced by clergy sexual abuse. Unknowingly, many families have colluded in the abuse of their children, welcoming into their homes the men that victimized their children. This creates an unsolvable dilemma for the abused children. How can

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They tell their parents that this priest, into whose hands the parents commend them, is a sexual predator? It becomes even more complicated for the child when the priest ingratiates himself into the life of the family, coming to dinner, providing alms, organizing youth activities or inviting the child to vacation with him. Survivors repeatedly speak of having no one or nowhere to turn to. Upon disclosure, many parents are stunned at how they helped perpetuate the abuse; this is a source of tremendous guilt for the parents. When the sexual abuse is unknown to the parents, the child engages in acting out behaviors, further ensuring the development of a rift between child and parents. This rift is not easily bridged, even when the children are adults. Again, Jim Sullivan provides an example.

There seem to be some similarities between survivors of clergy sexual abuse and survivors of state torture. Individuals from both survivor groups refer to the all-pervasive quality of the experience — there is no safety; there is no one who can be trusted. In both instances, the institutions created to protect them have betrayed them — the state and the church. The survivors of one type of abuse report strong bonds of kinship with survivors of the other type. Local and national survivor networks have been established for the mutual support of people from each group, whereas it is uncommon to find survivor networks for victims of natural disasters, incest, crime or other trauma. Both groups wish to be known as survivors, not victims. Sister Diana Ortiz, a survivor of torture in Guatemala, writes: “To call us victims is to validate the image our torturers tried to mold us into and leave us — weak, subjugated, helpless. We are not victims. We are survivors.” Sadly, when survivors of state torture or clergy sexual abuse have tried to report their experiences, both groups have often first been met with denial from the institutions, church and state, under whoseegis the abuse took place, compounding the damage and further degrading the survivors’ ability to trust. A means of reconciliation may also be found in the experience of torture survivors, something to which we will return at the conclusion of this article.

TRAUMA AND MEMORY

One of the perplexing questions related to trauma exposure is the role of memory. It is not uncommon for survivors of severe trauma to have variable and fragmented memories of the traumatic events. In the early 1990s, it was the emerging memories of one survivor, Francis Fitzpatrick, that uncovered the abuse perpetrated by Father James Porter, leading more than sixty survivors eventually to come forward. Yet if this abuse was significant in the lives of so many, how could those memories have lain dormant while the impact of the abuse was being experienced in many aspects of their lives? This question remains unanswered by psychological science,

When the sexual abuse is unknown to the parents, the child engages in acting out behaviors, further ensuring the development of a rift between child and parents.

although some hypotheses are beginning to emerge.

Memory of trauma represents a complex interplay of neuro-biological, psychological and cognitive factors. In many ways we are our memories; memory provides us with the narrative material and experiences to construct a personal autobiography. Deficits in memory can lead to gaps, including gaps in one’s personal narrative and the ability to make meaning from experience.

For example, Van der Kolk, Hopper and Osterman have examined the biological strata of traumatic memory. They proposed that in extreme stress there is a failure in the hippocampus area of the brain, which processes memories. The incoming emotional state is so overwhelming that it cannot be put into a coherent narrative; that is, the feelings associated with the trauma are not attached to the story of how the feelings came about. They remain as memory traces, but unattached to a story line. These feelings may erupt in intense emotional states, but the person has no knowledge of where they came from. This theory fits with the experience of Mr. Fitzpatrick, who was abused by Father Porter. As Mr. Fitzpatrick, a private detective, began to investigate his own experience of intrusive memories and experiences, he discovered his abuse history, which he then began to integrate into his personal narrative.

Yet why do most survivors of massive trauma (i.e., war, devastation, disasters, terrorism) remember aspects of their experiences in such great detail, while others do not? One explanation comes from the cognitive neuroscientist and psychologist Jennifer Freyd, herself a survivor of adolescent sexual abuse who only remembered it as a professional adult. She specifies the importance of the role of the abuser in promoting amnesia for these events. When the child must depend upon the abuser for their very survival, there is greater likelihood that the child will not encode the abuse as such. Her “betrayal trauma theory” represents a cogent evolutionary model for understanding the forgetting of abuse. The child must continue to live with the perpetrator in order to have his/her physical needs met. Freyd states, “Betrayal trauma theory posits that knowledge isolation

(including memory repression, dissociation and unawareness) serves a survival function in necessary human relationships where betrayal occurs." Psychological processes such as memory failure or dissociation serve to preserve the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, particularly when the perpetrator is a highly valued person such as a parent or caretaker or priest. The more intimate the relationship the less persistent or more distant from awareness will be the memories of abuse. This theory has been supported by research on amnesia rates for sexual abuse victims, which shows higher rates for incest victims than for non-incest victims.

The intimacy, power differential and family components seen in the relationship between a priest perpetrator and a child victim could provide the context that would lead to both neuro-biological and psychological factors interfering with the memory function.

TRAUMA TREATMENT

Fortunately, the high rates of trauma exposure and the close relationships of PTSD with other psychiatric diagnoses, particularly substance abuse and mood disorders, have led to significant research in the area of treatment. Although this is a complex disorder, it is treatable.

The first step in treatment is a proper assessment. As noted, traumatic exposure is a precondition of PTSD, but not all traumatic exposures lead to it. During the assessment phase a detailed history is taken, and psychometric measures may be administered to assess symptoms and to determine whether the patient's symptoms fit with a diagnosis of PTSD or another psychiatric disorder. Only after a proper diagnosis is established can a treatment plan be developed. Often a dual diagnosis is made, such as PTSD with depression or with alcohol abuse. Decisions are then made on whether disorders should be treated sequentially or simultaneously. The decisions on which disorder to treat first is generally more one of emphasis, as improvement in one domain is often beneficial across all. In practice, the patient has to be treated as a whole person closely involved and owning the treatment planning, decisions and process.

In 1945, Otto Fenichel outlined the two components of trauma treatment that are still drawn on today in the development of treatment plans: 1) attempts to reduce the anxiety and reactivity to the traumatic event; 2) attempts to reconstruct the details of the event with the accompanying emotional reactions, to promote mastery over memories of the event. A number of therapies have been developed to achieve the above goals, but a precondition for all these interventions is that the treatment environment must be safe. Without a safe treatment environment the probability of a positive outcome is low.

The intervention program of psychologists Terry Keane and David Barlow is based on a six-phased approach to treatment that includes:

1. *Behavioral stabilization* — substance abuse addressed; basic needs addressed; crises managed; beginning therapeutic relationship; psychopharmacology referral if needed.
2. *Trauma education* — education and normalization of patient's experience; symptoms reviewed and explained.
3. *Anxiety management training* — relaxation training; cognitive distortions identified and rational self-statements developed; communication skills and anger management.
4. *Trauma focus work* — desensitization using anxiety management training; exposure to traumatic stimuli; systematic uncovering work
5. *Relapse prevention* — management of trauma and substance abuse cues; developing social support and intimate relationships; learning to ask for help.
6. *Aftercare services* — use of community support, such as AA and survivor groups; community involvement.

There are other treatments available, but most include many of the components outlined above. It is most important that the treating therapist have a sound working knowledge and training in trauma therapy.

TRAUMA, SHAME AND SPIRITUALITY

It is expected that being sexually abused by a priest will influence religious beliefs and practices. In a doctoral dissertation, Martha Dedricks examined fifty-six male subjects, seventeen that were survivors of sexual abuse (not by clergy), and thirty-nine with no history of abuse. Although the abused and non-abused groups did not differ significantly in their religious practices (e.g., church attendance, scripture reading), the abused group did feel "significantly less loved and forgiven by God." There are no quantitative data available on the spiritual functioning of survivors of clergy sexual abuse. It is expected that their internal experience of the presence of God would be at least as affected as that of other survivors of sexual abuse. The stories of Melissa Smith and Jim Sullivan (in this issue) demonstrate the spiritual devastation caused by their abuse.

Shame is often noted as central to the experience of survivors of sexual abuse. In shame, it is the self that is questioned rather than the actions of the self. Shame can cause someone to question his or her fundamental value as a person, to see the self as bad or flawed. This can be particularly acute for someone abused by a priest, for the fault must lie with the victim rather than the priest, a recognized symbol of good. This is, in fact, the experience of Melissa Smith as recounted in this issue. In referring to the impact of clergy sexual abuse, Bishop Robinson states: "Anything that causes people to lose confidence in themselves or to see themselves as in any way contaminated and unclean will profoundly affect their relationship with God and other people."

Thomas Merton described spiritual development as

becoming fully human," where one awakens and attunes oneself to listen to his or her heart. Yet when shame is so pervasive in one's self-perception, how can that listening take place? As treatments have evolved for the mental health care of survivors of trauma, methods of spiritual direction that respond to the particular needs of survivors of clergy sexual abuse must also evolve.

FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is central in the Catholic tradition. From the cross Christ said: "Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing" (Luke, 23:34); yet after a violation, arriving at forgiveness is not an easy task. It is even more difficult for survivors of clergy sexual abuse. They have often been offended twice, first by the priest perpetrator of the sexual abuse and then by the church's response, which was more often focused on preservation of the institution than the well-being of the individual. Research into the process of forgiveness has found that it is easier for a person to forgive when the offender acknowledges fault and shows remorse. Many perpetrators, as well as some of the hierarchy, have failed to show remorse for their actions. This may be due to legal complications associated with ongoing litigation, but nonetheless has complicated the healing process for many survivors. It is inappropriate to expect survivors to take the first step in any forgiveness process; we must reach out to them.

The reconciliation model has been used on numerous occasions to address institutional and community trauma. The most publicized example of this model was the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. This model provides an organized, three-step process to arrive at a reconciliation that would hopefully free survivors to forgive, but not forget, and to continue forward in their lives. The three steps are:

1. **Acknowledgement:** This is a public recognition of the scope of the problem and the role played by various individuals and institutions in the process. Bearing witness, giving testimony and creating memorials are all forms of open acknowledgement.
2. **Apology:** A sincere apology is made by both the individuals and the institutional representatives involved in the abuse. The victim/survivor is empowered to accept or reject the apology.
3. **Reparation:** This is an attempt to repair the damage done. This may include monetary settlements, access to rehabilitation services or other means that allow the survivor an equal chance at living a full life.

As noted, the legal complications surrounding clergy sexual abuse can make individuals and institutions reluctant to acknowledge responsibility and apologize for past actions, but a simple response to that dilemma may be the same answer Christians often give to other moral dilemmas: "What would Jesus do?"

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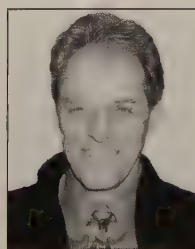
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TRANSFORMING Memory

Joseph J. Guido, O.P.



The sexual abuse crisis in the church has left many victims in its wake. Survivors of abuse by priests and religious have been forced to revisit painful experience. Good priests feel tarred by the crimes of a few. The laity is alternately sad, angry and dismayed that so little was done for so long to such ill effect, and at what cost to children and the moral authority of the church. Even the truth has fallen victim when blame is affixed where it does not belong or in the absence of compelling evidence. Yet there are victims who have hardly merited a mention in the media or in intramural debates but who have watched this crisis unfold from a unique perspective. They are the millions of Catholics who were abused by someone other than a priest, and what the church can learn from their experience of the crisis is critical to ensuring that its response is adequate to the needs and the grace of this moment.

Their experience suggests that the church's response should be both catholic in breadth and Catholic in substance. It should be a response that accounts for all victims of abuse. It should also be a response that is joined to the remembrance of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Indeed, remembrance of these forgotten victims highlights the importance of memory generally in responding to sexual abuse and the specific importance of the memory at the heart of the church. For the church, which has profaned the memory of Christ, is also the church to be redeemed by that memory, and it is this church, so abjectly humbled by the crisis, that is yet entrusted with his memory for the healing of all.

In this article I first describe the general phenomenon of sexual abuse, of which abuse by priests is a subset. I will then delineate three ways to appraise the crisis in the church from the perspective of its forgotten victims: 1) as a time of grace and an opportunity for healing; 2) as an invitation to a transformation of meaning and significance; 3) as a decisive moment in the church's

story. In doing so, I draw upon my clinical work with survivors of sexual abuse as well as relevant research. I then look to the act of remembrance in the liturgy as a model for how memory can serve to heal both victims and the church, and conclude by suggesting that the church can perhaps serve best by bridging the subjective memory of abuse and the objective memory of redemption in Christ.

GENERAL PHENOMENON OF SEXUAL ABUSE

Estimates of the prevalence of sexual abuse vary, although most studies conclude that it is far more common than imagined. In their landmark study of human sexuality, Edward O. Laumann and his colleagues at the University of Chicago found that 12 percent of males and 17 percent of females report that they were sexually abused as children by an adolescent or an adult. This means that of 290 million Americans, 43 million are survivors of abuse, of whom perhaps 23 percent, or 10 million, are Catholic.

According to Laumann et al, the reported abuse was most often perpetrated by someone close to the child — parents and stepparents, relatives, siblings, babysitters, older children and adolescents, teachers and coaches — while abuse by strangers was relatively uncommon. Girls were most likely to be abused by adult men and male adolescents, while boys were most likely to be abused by female adolescents, followed by male adolescents and adult men. The abuse most frequently involved genital touching (82 percent to 92 percent), but incidences of oral sex (as many as 30 percent of males) and vaginal and anal intercourse (up to 42 percent and 18 percent, respectively) were common. Some were abused only once (34 percent), more were abused several times (38 percent), and a substantial minority were abused many times (27 percent). The frequency of abuse did not seem to be an effect of race, ethnicity or social class. Strikingly, although most women (70 percent) and many men (45 percent) say that the abuse had affected their lives and nearly always negatively, very few women (26 percent) or men (15 percent) ever told anyone about the experience.

These numbers underscore the obvious fact that the sexual abuse of children by priests is a subset of a much larger phenomenon of sexual abuse. Less obviously but no less importantly, they suggest that the church's response to the crisis of sexual abuse by priests and religious has implications for survivors generally. Indeed, although relatively few Catholics have been abused by priests, many more Catholics are survivors of sexual abuse and cannot but be affected by this crisis and how the church responds to it. In turn, how they have been affected has three implications for the church's response.

First, the church should calibrate its response by acknowledging that the crisis has a plurality of meanings. Survivors differ, and how they have been affected varies.

Painful though coverage of the crisis has been for many, it has served as a grace and an opportunity for healing for those who were not abused by priests, but by others.

Paradoxical though it may seem, the crisis can serve for some as a time of grace and an opportunity for healing. Second, there can be no return to a presumed norm in light of which the crisis is understood as a tragic exception. Too much has happened to too many for this to be possible or advisable. Rather, the church should help the many survivors of abuse transform the meaning and the significance of the crisis by finding God anew. This may be especially important for priests, religious and seminarians who are survivors of abuse and who confront a more immediate challenge to their faith and vocation. Third, the church should understand the crisis as a prophetic, revelatory and decisive moment that is meant not for some but for all.

THREE WAYS TO UNDERSTAND THE CRISIS

The Crisis as a Time of Grace and an Opportunity for Healing

Some people have been prompted by the crisis to disclose their own abuse for the first time. A burly young man said that he had been abused by his high school football coach and that, because he had told no one about what had happened, his decision to forego an athletic scholarship to a major university led to questions he could not answer and earned him derision from family and friends. "I guess now, with everything going on, is the time to deal with it," he said. Another man, in his mid-thirties, said that coverage of the crisis in the church helped him to face the fact that he had been abused as a child by an older female cousin who would babysit him. He confided that he had "never thought of calling it abuse before" but was now "beginning to see how it affected so much of what I do." A young woman was inspired to ask whether her attempted suicide several years ago may have been related to the fact that a neighbor had abused her when she was a freshman in high school, although "I never thought of linking them before."

By entering seminaries or religious life, many victims of abuse have found refuge, healing and a purpose worthy of their lives. Some are now asking difficult questions about that calling.

Painful though coverage of the crisis has been for many, it has served as a grace and an opportunity for healing for those who were not abused by priests, but by others. This is all the more significant, given the relatively few survivors who disclose their experience, as noted above. It also suggests that the church should calibrate its response to the crisis with awareness that God is yet active, in ways we would not anticipate, for the sake of those who would otherwise have no voice and for the righting of what is wrong. This is, after all, one of the central tenets of the Gospel the church professes and what it invites survivors of abuse to believe.

It also cautions against repeating, if only inadvertently, a silencing many survivors know too well. Time and again survivors have confided that their silence was less a desire to keep their experience secret than that others were not prepared to hear what they had to tell. The young man abused by his football coach gave every sign that something had gone terribly wrong — the sudden decision to quit the team, drug and alcohol abuse, irritable moods and a steep decline in grades — but no one inquired. The young woman who tried to commit suicide told her mother at the time of the abuse that she had been “touched badly,” to which her mother replied, “but not that badly.” And a young man who had been abused in his family told his health teacher and a camp counselor who said to him, respectively, “But it’s all taken care of now, right?” and “No you weren’t.” As the poet T. S. Eliot put it, “human kind/ Cannot bear very much reality,” and is wont to deny what it does not want to hear.

The church should, therefore, be careful not to construe the crisis or its response so narrowly as to exclude the experience of other survivors and the possibility of healing that the crisis offers. It should also lend its vital resources — sacramental, liturgical, pastoral and social — to the well-being of all who have survived abuse, whatever its origin and whoever its perpetrator. To do otherwise risks forfeiting the grace of the moment.

Survivors of sexual abuse have found themselves re-traumatized by the crisis in the church. The all but daily accounts, in sometimes unsparing detail, have occasioned painful reminiscences, heightened sensitivity and vigilance and led to fears that what they thought they had dealt with and put behind them was coming round to torment them again. This may be especially true for the many priests, religious and seminarians who were abused as children. A study conducted by John Chibnall, Ann Wolf and Paul Duckro of St. Louis University found that nearly 19 percent of religious sisters reported a childhood experience of sexual abuse and that 60 percent reported a history of abuse, harassment or exploitation at some point in their lives. In a paper presented in 1993, psychologist John Loftus reported that as many as one-third of men religious and two-thirds of women religious may be survivors of sexual abuse, figures comparable to what is found among patients generally in clinical settings.

By entering seminaries or religious life, many victims of abuse have found refuge, healing and a purpose worthy of their lives. Some are now asking difficult questions about that calling. One seminarian who had been abused as a child by a neighbor asked, “Are my motivations genuine? Am I a risk to children? Am I doing what God wants, or am I merely running and hiding?” A priest who had been abused by neighborhood toughs and who had never disclosed the abuse to his family described himself as being “caught in a bind. My family is angry at the church right now, and so am I, but part of me is also angry at them because they never guessed what was happening to me. At the same time, I don’t know how to explain the church’s behavior to my parishioners. In both cases, what I love seems to have betrayed me.” Another priest who was abused as a child by a priest said simply, “I do not know what to think, what to do, what to say.”

Although it is tempting to reassure survivors that having been abused need not taint their motives or make them prone to abuse others, no one should gainsay the courage inherent in posing and answering such questions for oneself. Indeed, the ability to do so is a sign of health because to reclaim one’s integrity, to see clear to a choice that is reasonably free and to be able to speak in a voice unconstrained by fear help to undo the shame, confusion and anxiety that are the common legacy of abuse. At the same time, these questions imply a more profound transformation of meaning and significance.

Kenneth Pargament is among the foremost researchers studying the use of religion for coping with negative life events and has noted an important distinction between religion’s ability to conserve meaning and significance and its capacity to transform them. He notes that, in the face of adversity, one’s first response is to hold onto what one already knows, that is, to hold fast to past ways of under-

standing and finding meaning in life and to what has brought comfort, consolation and hope. However, there are some events and circumstances that try this ability to conserve meaning and significance and rather invite their searching transformation, a re-finding of meaning and significance in a different guise and in new and often unexpected ways. For Pargament, this journey of transformation is hard and unsettling but necessary if one is to cope with the crisis successfully.

The experience of sexual abuse would certainly qualify as one that could challenge the conservation of significance and impel its transformation, and it may be helpful to conceive of survivors' questioning of their faith and vocation in such terms. The goal is not a wholesale change in or abandonment of religious commitment nor the construction of an angry redoubt — indeed, Pargament warns that neither of these strategies is associated with successful coping — but rather accompanying individuals as they find God anew. This may well entail counseling and psychotherapy, but for survivors who are devout and those who are religious professionals, the foremost requirement may be sensitive and informed spiritual guidance. Indeed, the richest traditions of spiritual guidance in the church accord with Pargament's findings.

Spiritual writers of various traditions agree that growth in the spiritual life requires ongoing conversion and entails passages through darkness and night to light and day. It is a journey marked by desolations as well as consolations, the loss of what was presumed to be God but was not, and the rediscovery of God where least expected, temptations to disbelief that mask a deepening faith, and, in it all, an invitation to dependence on God alone. In this sense, growth in the spiritual life and growth in the ability to cope with adversity equally require individuals sometimes to find meaning and significance anew. (Cf. the articles by Patricia Ashley and Kenneth Hughes in the Fall 2003 issue of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.)

By training spiritual directors, preachers and retreat masters, and providers of pastoral care and counsel to work with survivors, the church will both aid the ability of survivors to cope with what has happened to them and support the difficult though necessary deepening of their lives of faith. In doing so, it will also be responding to the crisis explicitly as church from the understanding of the incarnation that animates it. For even as Jesus is fully human and fully divine, so then must the process of recovery and healing be, the eminently human need for a transformation of significance in the midst of adversity being joined to the progressive revelation of the presence, love and mercy of God.

The Crisis as Decisive Moment

Many survivors would appear to be unaffected by the

To be certain, remedies specific to the abuse of children by priests are necessary, and some of them may be radical if they are to be effective. But more is needed.

crisis in the church. Their own experience may have inured them, knowing all too well, as they do, that innocence is no indemnity and that evil can assume any guise. Some may be far from faith or indifferent to the church, others focused on their own healing, while others, like Catholics generally, find it possible to hold fast to the faith while acknowledging the failures of its ministers. Beyond these appearances, however, lies a deeper challenge for the church.

A young woman who survived years of abuse by a family member attended a forum addressing the crisis in the church. In recounting her experience of the discussion, she said, "I resented it. Everyone was going on about how bad it was, how wrong the church was to cover it up, how sad it was to hear the victims' stories. I felt like saying 'get real, this happens all the time.' My family knew and no one did anything. It went on for ten years. I mean, yes it is sad to hear these stories and the church was wrong to cover it up, but what about us? Who was there for me? Who is bearing witness to my story? Who's talking about protecting all the children?"

The ancient Greek word *kairos* was used to describe a decisive moment, as when a lawyer pressed a case in court to gain advantage or when an archer let an arrow fly to hit a target. In the New Testament this word refers to the significance of the present moment as the time of the Lord in the sense of "now is the time" of grace or "now is the day" of his visitation. Notably, in the New Testament and in recent church documents, *kairos* is understood to apply not to some but to all; it is the revelation of God's saving grace for all humankind. In essence, it does not admit of limitation.

No doubt most would agree that this is a decisive moment for the church in the United States. It is a time for honesty and admission, reckoning and recompense, and a time for sorely needed change. To do less would be to deny the Lord his visitation.

However, if this decisive moment is understood solely in terms of priests who sexually abuse children and the inadequate and sometimes complicit response of bishops, then remedies will be proportionate, but the church will fail the

It is no surprise, therefore, that the church must acknowledge its complicity where warranted, bear witness to survivors' accounts and extend an offer of aid to them.

offer of a fuller grace. To be certain, remedies specific to the abuse of children by priests are necessary, and some of them may be radical if they are to be effective. But more is needed. Implicit in this young woman's questions and in the statistics chronicling sexual abuse is an invitation to consider how the church might respond not only to the crisis in its midst but also to the crisis of sexual abuse generally, and in this bear a truer witness to this decisive moment by refusing to forget anyone.

FORGETTING, REMEMBERING AND THE SAVING REMEMBRANCE OF CHRIST

Psychiatrist Judith Herman has noted that knowledge about sexual abuse and other kinds of trauma undergoes a peculiar amnesia. At least since the time of Freud, periodic acknowledgement of the extent and effects of abuse has contended with long periods of disbelief and forgetfulness, the knowledge going underground, as it were, to reemerge at a later time and often in a different and sometimes distressing guise. Indeed, she argues, it is only when private tragedy becomes a social crisis, as it has now, that the reality of abuse is acknowledged and victims are accorded the credence and help that they need.

Memory is therefore central to healing in the wake of trauma. Indeed, clinicians of various persuasions agree that it is the ability to remember and acknowledge the trauma, and to reexamine and possibly alter the beliefs and feelings that accompanied it, which is critical to an individual's healing. Yet the force of Herman's argument is that there is an intimate connection between individual healing and collective memory. This means that, however necessary and important, an individual's reckoning with what has befallen him or her does not suffice for a community's acknowledgement. This is why Herman argues that reconnection to the human community is a necessary stage in recovery from trauma.

It is no surprise, therefore, that the church must

acknowledge its complicity where warranted, bear witness to survivors' accounts and extend an offer of aid to them. This is what is minimally required if healing is to take place. Yet the memory and acknowledgement to which the church is called is broader and deeper than what can be effected by a minimal response. As the notion of *kairos* implies, it is a memory that should include all victims of abuse, not just those victimized by the church's ministers. To do less unfairly restricts the offer of grace and, as Herman would suggest, perpetuates a state of disconnection where individual grief and collective acknowledgement do not meet. At the same time, the church has been entrusted with the unique memory of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and it is in joining this decisive moment to the saving remembrance that the subjective memory of survivors is joined to the objective memory of God's saving grace, and healing is ensured.

At the heart of the Catholic tradition is the Mass, and at the heart of the Mass is remembrance: Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again. In Jewish and Christian ritual remembrance constitutes a special kind of memory that makes present and operative an event from the past, and, specifically, the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church puts it, "the memorial is not merely the recollection of past events but...they become in a certain way present and real." Thus, the saving events of Jesus' life, death and resurrection are not only subjectively remembered but are objectively presented so that believers enjoy sacramental participation in events in which they could not otherwise share. Far from being passive or figurative, this participation is such that Christ and the believer are truly present to one another.

Remembrance should, therefore, be a focal point in the church's response to the sexual abuse crisis. It locates memory at the heart of healing, as clinically it must be, and yet expands our understanding of what can be remembered and what can be effected by the act of remembering. To the subjective memory of the survivor is added the objective memory — the objective presentation — of the death and resurrection of Jesus, himself abused and disbelieved but vindicated, who thereby vindicates and redeems every victim and proffers the healing of all. No longer is acknowledgement limited to the immediate community of family and friends, parish and diocese but is extended to the whole church and even more, to God. It is God who was present when abuse occurred, God who bears witness to survivors' stories, God who invites reconnection, and God who would heal, compensate and console. Nor is acknowledgement limited to those abused by priests, for the objective memorial of Jesus' saving death and resurrection is intended for all. In this way, remembrance is joined to decisive moment, and memory is transformed.

Looking at the crisis in this way can, therefore, effect a threefold healing of divisions. First, it heals the temporal

divide between the saving past and the wounded present so that in faith and sacrament the redemptive acts of Jesus truly effect the redemption of survivors today. Second, it invites the healing of the divide between survivors and God. The God who was seemingly absent at the time of abuse, who apparently did nothing to intervene, or who was invoked as justification by priest abusers, now meets the God who willingly became a victim for victims, who knows in his own flesh their pain, humiliation and loneliness, and who, thus united to them, would raise them with him to new life. Third, God heals the implicit division between survivors of abuse by priests and survivors generally, giving both equal participation in the act of remembrance and healing, and binding the church to both.

How then might this expanded understanding of memory as saving be reflected pastorally? Although a thorough consideration of the topic is beyond the scope of this article, several possibilities suggest themselves.

First, periodic Masses might be offered for the intentions of survivors and their families. This will require preparation and publicity and should be sensitive to the fact that not all survivors may want to be identified as such even though they may want to participate. Such celebrations should be open to all and reflect an ecclesial acknowledgement and communion. It may also be helpful to consider special votive Masses on these occasions, the use of appropriate canons and collects, and the addition of vigils and special prayer services.

Second, homilies sensitive to the fact that one in seven of the people in the pews is a survivor, and prayers of the faithful that periodically acknowledge the reality of sexual abuse and the need for healing, unfold this tragedy into the saving mystery. So, too, do bulletin announcements about the availability of counseling and pastoral care, communal celebrations of the Anointing of the Sick that invoke healing for victims, and celebrations of the Sacrament of Reconciliation that acknowledge the difficulty of forgiving perpetrators and, indeed, of forgiving oneself as a victim.

Third, the church can also lend its public voice to victims in a renewed theology of redemption that acknowledges the pervasiveness of sexual violence by ensuring that its ministers are well-informed and sensitively trained, and by encouraging its colleges and universities to mount scholarly programs and inquiries into the causes of and remedies for the abuse of children. In doing so the church may forestall additions to the ranks of victims. At a minimum, it will help to ensure that no victim will be left to wonder whether anyone knows or believes or cares because it would be apparent that God does.

None of this will be easy to do. It is also not apparent to some that the church should be the one to do it, guilty as it is from within its own ranks. But the church of Peter is accustomed to penitent sinners who find in their own redemption a call to redeem others, conditioned on remem-

brance of what would easily be forgotten. At the end of John's Gospel, Peter is charged with feeding the Lord's sheep, precisely as his threefold denial of Jesus is recalled. In that brief passage, remembrance and mercy are joined, and healing is effected by the one betrayed. We should not be surprised, therefore, that the painful memory of the church's sins should be joined to a commitment to forget no victim of abuse, the church of Peter bearing both his guilt and his commission.

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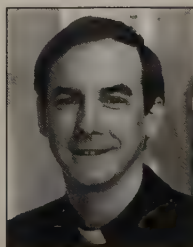
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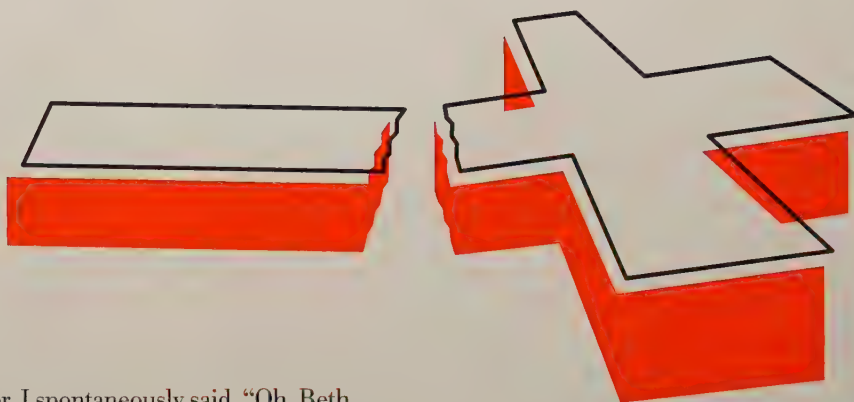
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A Hidden Effect of the **SEXUAL ABUSE CRISIS**

Anne Francis



After a delightful moment with my daughter, I spontaneously said, “Oh, Beth, what a wonderful gift from God you are! I am so in love with you.” Simply stated, I thought, but not so for my seven-year-old Elizabeth. She replied, “Mom, you can’t be in love with me. You’re in love with Dada, and Dada is in love with you. That’s only for boys and girls.” I will not go into the details of our ensuing conversation, but what she said made me stop to think for a moment. But, as usual, more mundane tasks diverted my attention.

A few weeks later, however, this conversation would come back to haunt me while on an eight-day Ignatian retreat. I had been looking forward to “my vacation with the Lord,” and I was therefore quite perplexed and thrown off guard when I felt nothing but tension and uneasiness the first two days. Fortunately, however, with the patience and understanding of my spiritual director, I soon discovered the reasons that caused this restlessness.

For many of us, the sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Church is no longer a crisis. Like many laypeople, I would sum up how I felt by saying, “Oh, of course, I still have my faith in God, but my trust in the institutional church has been deeply and immeasurably shaken.” At first glance, the preceding statement seems straightforward enough. The church is made up of humans, and it can certainly make mistakes. However, is it that simple? Has each one of us consciously made a clear distinction for ourselves between who Jesus Christ is and what role the church plays in his saving activity? I propose that we have not, and that as a result of the scandal in the church and by association, the images we have of our Savior have become dulled and are not as clear and as exact as they should be.

I believe that this happened in my case and that, if I had not gone on retreat, my spiritual life would have suffered much more than it already had. The frightening side to all of this is that I still had faith in Jesus Christ but was unaware that something had seriously gone wrong in my relationship with him.

Fortunately, the Gospel at our first liturgy was about the woman who had suffered from a hemorrhage for more than twelve years. She believed she could be cured if she but touched Jesus' cloak. Due to the fact that I was feeling so troubled, I readily identified with this woman because I knew that I, too, was in need of healing. Of the three Gospels, Mark's Gospel (5:25-35) gives the most information on this determined and faith-filled woman and actually provides us with a very moving story if we pay close attention to all the details.

Mark first says that this woman has heard about Jesus. One can easily imagine that she is hurrying to see if what she has heard is true. She believes that if she can just touch Jesus' cloak, she will be cured. She finally gets close enough to see Jesus, but there is an immense crowd around him. She does not let this deter her and does manage to touch Jesus' cloak. Mark says that she immediately feels that she is healed of her disease. At the same time, Jesus notices that power has gone forth from him.

At this point it is interesting to note that with the crowd surrounding Jesus, many people must have bumped into or touched him. This is why the disciples are almost annoyed with Jesus when he asks them, "Who touched me?" What is fascinating here is that Jesus is present to everyone in the crowd. Most of these people must have had some faith in Jesus, or they would not have been there. However, he is only able to connect with the woman with the hemorrhage. She has reached out to touch him, and he in turn has reached out to her. It seems that none of this has been visible to the crowd. It has mostly taken place within and between the two of them.

Something more, however, than this woman's healing has occurred. She has now become consciously aware of who Jesus actually is. When she was approaching Jesus of Nazareth, it seems that she was not afraid. Yet a woman in her condition should have been afraid, considering the customs of the time. What she had heard about him seems to have put her at ease in touching him. But now, due to her cure, her faith is no longer based on hearsay. She has encountered the "living God," and this is why she now approaches Jesus in "fear and trembling" and tells him the "whole truth." Her cure resulted from the fact that she and Jesus connected and were in a conscious relationship, or, more simply stated, were in prayer together.

At this point, as a reader, you are probably thinking that I have way too much time on my hands, but please bear with me

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a bit longer. I believe that many of us who attend Mass every Sunday are very much like the crowd that surrounded Jesus. We are there, but we are not connecting with our Savior. We rely on what others tell us about him, and that is where our faith mostly lies. Furthermore, we believe this faith is enough, and we don't take or have enough time to go beyond it.

However, we cannot let this continue. If the faith we now have does not result from a personal relationship with Christ but somehow remains totally dependent on what we hear from our very "human church," then the sins that this church has committed might very well cloud or even disrupt our faith in God. I know that this is what happened to me. I had somehow transferred unconsciously the way I felt about the church's scandalous behavior to the way I felt about God and how I thought God felt about me. I

could not name it right away, but with God's grace, our relationship was renewed, and I was able, therefore, to define and separate who he is from what the church has done.

I will be forever grateful for those eight days, for they allowed me once again to fall in love with my Savior. Going back to the conversation I had with my daughter at the beginning of this essay, I would like to suggest that there is quite a difference between "loving someone" and "being in love with another." The first is more passive; the second is always active. The first does not require a response, whereas the second does and waits to see if this love is pleasing and acceptable. The first can exist without a relationship, while the second draws its very life from one. The rich young man of the Gospels did indeed love God and kept all the commandments. However, he was not ready to take the next step and fall into Love itself.

In conclusion, we cannot rely on hearsay or on another's faith to experience our Creator and Lord. We must purposely develop and constantly nourish a personal relationship with Jesus Christ so that we will then know exactly in whom our faith rests and what this faith entails.



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Spiritual Healing

William A. Barry, S.J.

Many survivors of childhood or teen-age sexual abuse, and not just those abused by clergy, note that their relationship with God has been badly affected by the abuse. Rebecca Parker writes that her abuser, a neighbor who raped her when she was five, “occupied the place of God. It was his presence, his will, his actions that ruled my life. I had no other god before him.” In this issue, both Melissa Smith and Jim Sullivan emphasize the spiritual devastation they experienced as a result of being sexually abused. The abuse crisis in the church has had damaging spiritual effects even on those not personally abused. Anne Francis, in this issue, attests that it had an adverse effect on her relationship with God; she is probably not the only member of the laity so affected. I want to look at the spiritual devastation wrought by sexual abuse and the crisis in the church, and to present some ways toward spiritual healing.

The article by Terence Keane and Robert McMackin and the stories of survivors of sexual abuse by priests recounted in this issue make clear the psychic havoc wreaked on those who have been abused and on their families. For many of the abused, depending on their age, prior vulnerability and other factors, the trauma is severe, and the psychic effects long-lasting. We hear of an almost schizoid life — seeming success on the outside accompanied by inner chaos and self-destructive and addictive behaviors. Years of relative inner peace can be shattered in a moment by something that triggers memories of the abuse. The stories of Melissa Smith and Jim Sullivan bring out the recurring nature of the effects of abuse, but they also provide signs of hope. Both were plunged back into inner chaos by the church crisis of 2002, but, because of earlier healing, they were able to bounce back more readily. In our pastoral care of trauma survivors we can be of help by reminding them of the past healing. In the “Rules for Discernment of Spirits” of his *Spiritual Exercises*, Ignatius of Loyola advises a person in desolation to “reflect that with sufficient grace already available he or she can do much to resist all hostile forces....” In like manner we can encourage trauma survivors who are plunged back into



arkness to recall the healing that has already taken place. Our pastoral response to such recurrences, however, needs to be tempered by the realization that the psychic trauma associated with childhood sexual abuse does not easily go away. It is particularly dispiriting for abuse survivors, who themselves are dismayed by the recurrent nature of the symptoms, to hear pastoral agents tell them that they need to "move on" or "get over it."

SPIRITUAL DEVASTATION

The reference to Ignatius of Loyola allows a segue into a discussion of the spiritual chaos that sexual abuse at a critical developmental age often triggers. Melissa Smith expresses it well. "What has caused me the most unspeakable agony, however, has been the loss of trust in a loving and forgiving God." As we listen to the stories of trauma survivors, we must not allow theological theory to get in the way of our listening. It will do little good to tell people like Melissa or Jim Sullivan that God is always and unconditionally in relationship with them. The problem is not knowledge as such. Melissa and others are not talking theology; they are trying to express the felt devastation of their personal relationship with God. They may know a great deal of theology, may, indeed, be able to teach others about the unconditional love of God. But they do not "know" this love in the biblical sense of "knowing," which is a felt knowing, a belief that gives peace and comfort and allows one to live a relatively peaceful life even in difficult times. The British psychiatrist, J. S. Mackenzie, states that "the enjoyment of God should be the supreme end of spiritual technique," and goes on to write: "in that enjoyment... we feel not only saved in the Evangelical sense, but life; we are conscious of belonging to God, and hence are never alone... In that relationship Nature seems friendly and comely..." It is this enjoyment of God that many people who were abused as children and teen-agers seem to have lost.

SELF-GOD STRUCTURES

All of us develop psychic structures that help us to make sense of our world. Among the most important of these structures are those that help us to make sense of our relationships with ourselves, with important others and with God. (These psychic structures are discussed in psychoanalytic circles in terms of "object relations.") They are ways we pattern our relationships with others on the basis of our experience. Since these structures begin to develop at birth or soon after, they are freighted with the accumu-

lated experiences of our lives with significant other people and with God. With these structures, sometimes called "images," we meet new situations in our lives, and they color our experience of these new situations.

Consider instant likes and dislikes, for example. Such instant reactions occur, according to psychologists, because we assimilate the new person or situation to a self-other structure or pattern developed earlier in life; the new person reminds us of someone else, and our first tendency is to react to this new person in the way we reacted to that past significant other. We can learn to differentiate this new person from the past person or situation if we are willing and able to stay in the new situation long enough to experience the new person as different from the past person. In this way we grow into more adult self-other patterns of relationship. Psychological difficulties arise when the earlier patterns or structures are rigid and prevent new learning. Such rigid patterns develop, say psychologists, to handle severe early trauma or anxiety.

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Similar structures also pattern our relationship with God, structures that begin to develop very early in life and govern our approach to God. Erik Erikson, for example, believed that fundamental attitudes toward life and thus toward an assumed author of life are strongly conditioned by the nurturing experiences of very early life. The crisis of his first psychosocial stage of development eventuates in either a tendency toward basic trust or mistrust, and this tendency also governs one's religious stance in life. The early self-God structures that develop out of experiences with significant others are, therefore, tinged with attitudes and feelings toward these significant others. These self-God structures color our approach to God in prayer, worship and life. Just as our childhood self-other structures need to become differentiated and nuanced through continuing experiences with new people whose uniqueness cannot be fitted into the procrustean bed of psychic structures based on the past, so, too, our childhood self-God structures need to change as we grow into adulthood.

All our self-God structures (or "images") are inadequate to the reality of God and God's real relationship with us. All our "images" of God are idols, more or less adequate pointers toward the mysterious reality we call God. One could argue that the purpose of a real and healthy religion is to help us to encounter this mysterious reality more and more adequately, that is, to meet God as God really is, not as our self-God structures expect. All real religion, then, should be iconoclastic in this sense: it wants to give God a chance to break down the inadequate self-God images we all carry. One can read the scriptures and the history of spirituality as God's almost des-

To meet God more nearly as God really is threatens these world-ordering patterns Such an experience can be profoundly threatening.

perate attempts to prove to us that God really is benign, really has our good at heart, really wants nothing more than our friendship. But our self-God structures make God's work very difficult at times.

These patterns of self and God in relation resist change even when they develop out of relatively benign relations with significant others and out of relatively healthy religious instruction. These patterns, after all, help us to make sense of our presence in this world. Hence they help us to ward off existential anxiety, anxiety before the ephemeral, endangered and contingent nature of life and existence. These self-God structures are the world-ordering patterns that give meaning to existence. People may want to develop a more mature and adequate relationship with God, may, indeed, believe that God is drawing them into such a more mature relationship, yet find themselves strangely resistant to engaging in such a relationship even after very positive experiences. They wonder why. The reason, I believe, lies in these self-God patterns. To meet God more nearly as God really is threatens these world-ordering patterns. For one thing, in the presence of God one becomes acutely aware of the radical contingency of one's existence, that one exists not out of necessity, but only because of God's desire, a gossamer thread upon which to rely, it seems. Such an experience can be profoundly threatening. For another, one can feel that one's very faith is being called into question; if God is not as I expect God to be and as I have been taught, is there any God at all?

I mention these resistances because understanding them can make us pastorally more sensitive to people. Resistance to new experiences of God is to be expected. All pastoral activity needs to take into account the inherently conservative nature of our self-God patterns or structures; they are such and thus resistant to change because they are world-ordering structures that ward off existential anxiety. Those who engage in pastoral ministry need to keep in mind that their pastoral activity, if it does its fundamental job well, threatens these structures because it tries to give the real God a chance to touch people. At the same time, they need to be sensitive to the fact that

resistance will be experienced by those so touched by God; they can help people by being sympathetic to their resistance even when it takes the form of anger at the messenger. I mention these resistances also so that we can have a better idea of how devastating sexual abuse and other early traumas can be. Even in the "green wood" of a relatively healthy personality development self-God structures are difficult to change. We must now try to imagine the relatively "dry wood" created by sexual abuse at critical developmental stages.

THE EFFECTS OF SEXUAL ABUSE ON SELF-GOD STRUCTURES

To begin to imagine what it is like in the "dry wood" let us consider, as an example, a scrupulous person. I once knew such a woman. Whenever she tried to pray, she felt in the presence of a harsh judge. Early in life her self-God image became frozen into one of a judge checking her out for faults and sins. Anyone who has dealt with a severely scrupulous person knows how difficult it is to help the person to a healthier attitude toward God. It can be very frustrating. It almost seems that the person is deliberately trying to frustrate one's efforts at pastoral care. The person cannot, however, help herself. The problem is one of a deeply embedded and rigid structure into which all the person's dealings with God must fit. Such a structure will not yield to ideas alone. Some new experience is necessary to soften the hard shell of a scrupulous person's self-God image.

What we need to recognize is that persons who have been abused by significant others as children are like such scrupulous people in their personality structure. They, too, will have learned ways of coping with their trauma and will have developed personality structures that help to contain the overwhelming anxiety and personal pain occasioned by the abuse. These personality structures will be rather rigid and impregnable precisely because they develop in order to contain such overwhelming anxiety and pain. With these structures they are able to get through life, but at a price. No matter the outer face they present to the world, they walk around wearing a protective inner shield whose purpose is to prevent the reoccurrence of such abuse. If the abuse occurs at a particularly impressionable age, such as between infancy and age seven or so or around the onset of puberty, then all their close relationships will be colored by the self-other structures developed at these stages to control overwhelming anxiety and pain.

These personality structures are difficult to change because they are relatively rigid and lead to an almost stereotyped behavior that may not have anything to do with the situation or person newly encountered. As soon as they meet a new adult who has any characteristics like those of the abuser, they react with these rigid personality structures. They tend also to repeat the abusive pattern, finding, without conscious seeking, new partners who will once again betray their trust. Melissa fell into such abusive relationships, as she details. They can also recoil in terror from situations that remind them of the abuser. Recall Melissa running in terror from the

tool building when she saw a person with black clothes (who turned out to be a magician) in a classroom. They tend to stay in new relationships long enough to learn new terms of relating.

Psychotherapy helps because the person remains long enough with the counselor so that he or she can learn new ways of coping. Friendships and other relationships, such as the one Melissa had with her husband, can help tremendously because they demonstrate experientially that not everyone one loves betrays one's trust. Pastoral care is also a great help. Melissa met a priest whose compassion and pastoral care helped her to begin to trust priests again and gradually enabled her to make use of the sacramental signs of touch and word that had been violated by her abuser.

Sexual abuse also colors the self-God structures that develop along with the self-other structures; for some the abuser takes the place of God. This means that their self-God structures become, for all practical purposes, infected with the feelings of attraction and terror associated with the abuser. Melissa speaks with heartbreaking sorrow of how her image of God became infected by her relationship with her priest abuser. At an impressionable age, in childhood or at the onset of puberty, when all one's self-other structures undergo radical change, someone you trust violates your body and that trust, often accompanying that violation with threats and blame. The self-God image cannot help but be affected badly. This is especially true if the abuser is a priest, someone who, for the victim, stands in the place of God. Because the trauma is so severe, the self-God image is frozen and difficult to change. It will take a great deal of careful pastoral care to soften this structure and to let the real God be experienced more nearly as God is.

WAYS THE SELF-GOD STRUCTURES ARE MODIFIED

We now turn to a discussion of ways to help survivors of sexual abuse recover a more healthy relationship with God. In what follows I take for granted God's activity in this world. God's creative action, which brings this world and everything and everyone in it into existence, never ceases. God is always actively working in this world to bring about what God wants. That God wants is a world where human beings live in kinship and friendship with the triune God, with one another and with the whole created universe. God is always trying to draw us into relationship of kinship or friendship in spite of our resistance. The purpose of all pastoral ministry in the church, it could be argued, is to give God the opportunity to convince us of God's desire for our kinship.

How do we help those who have been traumatized by

sexual abuse to meet this God who wants their friendship? We have to realize that we are, at best, only enablers of God's work. We cannot save; we cannot change people's self-God structures. We can only do our small part in the great work of God. But we must believe that God is active and at work to draw everyone into a relationship of intimacy. We must believe

this even in the face of massive resistance to any overtures by God. We must believe it in the face of much of our culture's disbelief in such activity by God. Only such a belief makes it possible for us to help people to meet God.

We need to be creative in helping to put skittish people into situations where God has a chance to break through their defenses. Our

own care for such people is one creative way. When we hear stories of sexual abuse (and of state torture), we will be buffeted by many deep emotions, some of which we may want to avoid. We may feel deep sadness and anguish for the person telling the story. We may boil with almost murderous rage at the perpetrator. We may want to run away, wishing that the person would stop talking. We may be tempted to disbelieve that such things really happened. We may want to take away the pain, to make it disappear. We may feel helpless to do anything and want to pass the person on to "someone who can help." But the best thing we can do at this point is to listen with sympathy and compassion and to be willing to let all these emotions run their course in us. Indeed, these emotions may give us some idea of how God reacts to such abuse. I have wept and come close to sobs as I listened to stories of abuse, and have come to believe that I am experiencing something of God's reaction. Our anger at the perpetrator may also reveal something of God's reaction to such abuse. Melissa Smith speaks eloquently of the care given to her by a priest, care that enabled her to meet God in a new and consoling way. Expressing our feelings of compassion, even by touch, if appropriate, can be one way to convey God's reaction to the survivor.

Creativity comes into play in the ways we suggest that people pray. Some people need help to try different ways to let God come close. The direct approach may not work because of their anger that God allowed the abuse to happen or because of their shame that it happened to them. One might suggest that they do something that they enjoy and ask God to be with them. This could be walking in the woods, looking at children playing, listening to music, anything that attracts their attention away from their own problems. With one woman who was very scrupulous this worked. Gradually she began to enjoy herself and felt that God was also enjoying the time. These experiences allowed her to talk more and more openly to God about her fears of God, about her anger at the demands her scrupulosity made on her, demands that seemed to come from God. At one point, intuiting anger, I asked her

whether she liked this God. She burst out angrily, "No, I hate him." I said, "Who wouldn't hate a God who made such demands." With time she came to believe that God was at least as angry about these demands as she was. She came to feel her relationship with God changing as she trusted these positive experiences.

Once after a talk on prayer a woman spoke about the effects of being sexually abused by her father when she was a child. In the course of much therapy and pastoral counseling she had been able to express her anger at her father, at her mother for not protecting her, and at God, too, who did nothing to protect her. Her anger at God was quite ferocious at times. Finally, she said, she realized that God had been with her during the abuse, weeping for her and wishing to hold her.

In *Proverbs of Ashes* Rebecca Parker, now an ordained minister and president of Starr King School for Ministry in Berkeley, CA, recounts a therapy session during which, with the help of a technique proposed by her therapist, she was able to go back in imagination to the scene where, at age five, she was raped by a neighbor. She had never been able to go there because, whenever she tried, she saw a dead child. "This time," she says,

I moved across the threshold. I was on that bed again. I was feeling the terror again. I swallowed hard, going again into that place of not being able to breathe, believing that I was going to die. Then I saw that my mother and grandmother were there with me. They could see what Frank was doing. Their sight was powerful. They would not let him get away with it. I felt comforted and strengthened by their presence. Then, with slow dawning, I felt the space encompassed with a great love that held me and confronted Frank. It was a force-field of presence that encompassed Frank as well. I knew that even if Frank killed me, nothing would separate me from this presence. I would be taken up into all embracing arms.

Tears came to my eyes as I returned to the present time and said to Sandi (her therapist) with amazement, "The child left for dead — she is the part of me who has experienced God! She knows there is a power that can stop Frank, and that, even if Frank succeeds, this power is greater than him and will still hold her and preserve her. She is my faith. She is the one who has never given up. She is the one who has been able to preach all these years, when I have been able to say from some place deep inside of me that there was grace at work in life that would see us through. She has always been with me. Her knowledge has never left me. She is the reason that people tell me that I am luminous or radiant, sometimes, something I have never understood... But ... it makes me angry that this is how I came to know God." (p. 210)

I would suggest that her anger might also be a reflection of God's reaction, that God, too, was angry that she had to come to know God through such a terrible trauma. Both of

When he told me the story at our daily meeting, he was desperate. He didn't know where to turn since, it seemed, even Jesus couldn't heal him.

these women discovered that God was present with them in their trauma. We who try to help survivors of sexual abuse can take comfort from the stories. But we cannot force this experience on other survivors. We can only point them toward relating with God so that God has a chance to show up in a healing way. And we need to remember that their relating with God may require the expression of strong anger at God for not protecting them from this trauma. God is big enough to handle the anger; we do not need to protect God from it.

These stories show how God uses imagination to bring about healing. Here is another story of such a healing. It happened on a retreat I was directing. Jim, a fifty-year-old priest had always felt deprived of the love of his father, a cold, distant man. Jim craved his love and still craves it, but has no hope that it will ever be given. During the retreat he found himself praying with the parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15: 11-32). As he imagined the parable, he became the older son, seething with anger, not only at the father, but also at a number of other people in his life whom he imagined as part of the scene. He could not enter the room where the father held the party for the younger son, but stood angrily outside. In one period of prayer Jesus came out to him and pulled him along to the house where Peter's mother-in-law lay sick (Mk 1: 30-31). When he and Jesus entered the house, it turned out that Jim was the sick one lying on the pallet. Jesus was trying to heal him, but could not. Jesus said, "His heart is too cold." Finally, Jesus seemed to give up, pulled the sheet over Jim and left with everyone else. The only one who stayed was Jesus' mother, who kept praying. When he told me the story at our daily meeting, he was desperate. He didn't know where to turn since, it seemed, even Jesus couldn't heal him. I suggested that he ask for the Father's help, which, in desperation, he decided to do. As soon as he began to pray, the Father appeared at the door of the house where Jim was lying, pushed it open, and shouted: "Where's my son, my beloved?" The Father picked Jim up and said: "All he needs is a new heart." He took out Jim's cold heart, threw it away and replaced it with one from his own breast. Jim sobbed with

itude and relief. Even days later all he needed to do, when fears assailed him, was to go to the Father in prayer, and all fears evaporated. Here we see how God can use the imagination to help someone develop a new self-God image, one in which God has the power to free him from his fears and his childish angers.

Perhaps part of our creative pastoral care might be to help those who have been sexually abused to let God use their imaginations to heal the self-God structures infected by the abuse. The stories we have just read give us ideas as to how it might suggest the use of imagination. As we have heard in the articles in this issue, shame is one deep wound left by sexual abuse in childhood. Many feel like the lepers of the gospels who shout "Unclean!" and have to avoid being touched. They can imagine themselves as the leper of Mark 1: 40-42, who said to Jesus, "If you choose, you can make me clean." Jesus, moved with pity, reached out and touched the man, saying, "I do choose. Be made clean!" Jesus is not named to touch the leper. People who have been abused can imagine Jesus and God the Father embracing them, kissing them, reaching deep inside them to heal their hurt hearts and souls. Of course, they have to be ready to try such imaginative exercises. Part of our pastoral work could be to help them to move in this direction.

Sacraments are another way to use the imagination when the person abused is able to ask for them. The touch of healing oil on hands and forehead in the Rite of Anointing allows the recipient to imagine God's healing hands on them. The words and gestures of the Sacrament of Reconciliation can bring healing balm as the person imagines God embracing him or her with a healing and forgiving love. Imagining the closeness of God after receiving the Body and Blood of the Lord is enhanced by the smell and taste of the bread and wine ingested. One can imagine God wanting to be so close and intimate.

Earlier in this article I mentioned that the crisis of clergy sexual abuse has affected others besides those who have been abused and their families. In our pastoral work we need to keep in mind the many who have experienced spiritual devastation as a result of the crisis. One thing we can do is to help all people to meet the living God, the God who wants nothing more than our friendship. This crisis is an opportunity for all of us to grow in our faith in God. For many of us faith in God has been too dependent on the church and on the hierarchy. I have, more than once, said in public that many of us who

entered religious life or seminaries after the Second World War did not have to believe in God. We could believe in the church or in our religious congregation, both of which were thriving. In these dark times we have an opportunity to put our faith where it belongs, in the Mystery we call God. We need to help one another to let God convince us of the truth enunciated by John's gospel:

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." (John 1:5)

CONCLUSION

Sexual abuse in childhood very often has devastating spiritual effects because the abuse affects the world-ordering psychological structures that govern our relationship with God and with the meaning of life. Sexual abuse by clergy can be even more devastating because clergy are so closely connected with God through their roles in the churches. These effects are difficult to overcome, but not impossible. We believe that God is always active in our world trying to draw all of us into a relationship of love and friendship. We who are ministering agents in the churches must use all our ingenuity to help people who are suffering the effects of the clergy sexual abuse crisis or the effects of sexual abuse by anyone to meet God who wants to heal, wants to restore trust, wants our friendship.

One issue that I have not been able to address in this article is forgiveness of the perpetrator by the survivor. That is a topic fraught with difficulties and dangers for the spiritual health of survivors of sexual abuse. Forgiveness cannot be demanded of the survivor. It can only come as a grace from God. Perhaps a future issue of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT will take up this difficult and demanding topic.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Barry, W. A. *Paying Attention to God: Discernment in Prayer*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria, 1990.

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Boys' Tears in Men's Eyes: *How Can We Help?*

Barbara Thorp, M.S.W., and
William A. Barry, S.J.

As we come to the end of this special issue of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT dedicated to the healing of the effects of clergy sexual abuse, we want to offer some pastoral suggestions that, we hope, flow naturally from what has gone before. We are well aware that we cannot answer all questions or touch on every aspect of the healing process. Our main focus, like the main focus of this entire issue, is on the survivors of sexual abuse and their families, but we do not want to lose sight of the many others whose spiritual lives have been wounded by this crisis in the church and who need pastoral care. We write primarily for those who have some pastoral responsibility in the church, whether they are clergy or lay, but what we say may also have relevance to many other church members. The healing of our church will require the efforts of all its members with the help of God.

Fear and shame may blunt the natural impulse of one's pastoral response to survivors of clergy sexual abuse and to those who are pained and outraged by the crisis in the church unleashed by the revelation of this abuse. At a time when raw anguish and suffering are palpable among the laity, some priests and other pastoral care ministers have stepped back from offering help, either because of their fear and shame or because they do not know how to help. This retreat may be fueled by the mistaken belief that the criminal and depraved acts of some priests have disqualified priests and other pastoral ministers from engagement in ministry aimed at binding up the wounds of betrayal and abuse.

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

The parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10: 29-37) may provide an entrée for reflection. After a beating and robbery the victim was callously left for dead on the road to Jerusalem. A priest and a Levite saw him on their journey to



Jerusalem, and both chose to cross to the opposite side and pass him by. Luke tells us that the Samaritan traveler was moved by compassion at the sight of him, and "he approached the victim and poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them." If the Samaritan was moved by compassion, one wonders at the motivation of the priest and the Levite, who hurried to the other side of the road. Is it concern for ritual purity? Was it hardness of heart or prejudice? Was it fear of becoming involved or of being libeled themselves? We would like to speculate that fear was their paramount motivation, whatever its provenance. Fear may abort feelings of compassion and thus the possibility of taking risks for the sake of the wounded other. Fear is a debilitating disease whose most potent and destructive symptom is the smothering of the impulse to respond with compassion to the distress of our neighbor.

At this moment in the life of the church, all those charged with any type of pastoral care face an awesome challenge. We can allow fear to control our response and thus shield ourselves from the gaping wounds borne most painfully by the victims of clergy sexual abuse, or we can open our hearts to the cries of these brothers and sisters. A male survivor of clergy sexual abuse frequently expresses his distress at the alienation and rejection he experiences from the church by saying, "We just want to be welcomed and embraced." His consistent use of the word "embrace" is notable given the years of abuse that he endured. When asked about this, he acknowledges that he longs for a "touch" from the Catholic Church that reflects his desire to know him and care for him in his confusion and suffering.

As we move forward, we will need to have the compassion of the Good Samaritan infused in our hearts. If we do feel that shame or fear has some control over our responses, we might be helped by admitting these feelings to the Lord and asking his help to overcome them so that our hearts become open to compassion. Such compassion is the first step, as the immediate binding up of the wounds was the Samaritan's first step. But the wounds of sexual abuse are not superficial and will require long-term attention. The Samaritan left resources for the victim's care and planned to return to check on his well-being. A relationship of caring had been established based on self-giving love and respect for the human dignity of another. We may need to ask the Lord for help for the long haul so that we do not suffer what has been called "compassion fatigue."

HELPFUL GUIDEPOSTS

When we enter unknown and fear-generating realms, it is helpful to have some guideposts for the journey. The following are some thoughts that may prove helpful. One priest remarked that because of the grave harm done by

Those of us who minister to others should not be afraid of our strong emotions as we hear the stories of those who have been abused.

priests it would be up to others in the church to restore trust. While the work of restoring trust is a mission for all the baptized, members of the clergy have an especially important role to play in this work of reconciliation and healing. Melissa Smith, in this issue, has written passionately of how the ministry of a priest brought spiritual healing and a re-introduction to the sacraments, especially the sacraments of Reconciliation and of the Sick. It may well be that a priest can be the instrument used by God to heal a wound inflicted by another priest.

RESPONSES TO SHAME

Many survivors of clergy sexual abuse struggle with a deep sense of shame embedded in their psyche. Some have been the victims of acts of almost unimaginable cruelty and of psychological terror and intimidation. Some survivors say it was like being raped by God. The belief among some survivors, that they invited and deserved to be abused, is a powerful, shaming force effectively distorting their self-image and capacity to trust others. One survivor of a priest who had molested many children was convinced that he had seduced the priest and was his only victim. This survivor lived with the shame and horror that he had led this holy priest to betray his vows.

The response of representatives of the church matters. It can reinforce such erroneous beliefs held by survivors, or it can contribute to a validation of the person as worthy of respect and authentic friendship. One survivor, repeatedly sexually abused more than forty years ago as a young girl of ten, sought out her pastor to tell him her story. He took it upon himself to speak with the now aged priest who had molested her. Her pastor came back to this woman with the words, "Well, he said that you seemed to go along with it." She was devastated by the cruelty and the insensitivity of these remarks. What she needed to

The most fundamental and important gift that we can bring to survivors is our time, presence and willingness to listen. Absorbing with them the pain, humiliation, shame and anger is in itself life-affirming.

hear, even as an adult, was that this priest's actions were both criminal offenses and a violation of a sacred trust for which she had no responsibility. She had a right to expect that she would be safe in the company of a priest. She needed to hear her pastor express anger and sorrow that a priest had done this to her and apologize for the grave harm inflicted on her by another priest. She needed to be asked how he could support her in healing. She needed to have the suffering she had endured all these years acknowledged. She needed to be thanked for the courage she exhibited in trusting him with her story and choosing to keep this terrible secret no longer. Most importantly, she needed to be believed and "embraced" by the church that she so loved. She needed to experience the tender mercy of God in the response of her pastor.

DEALING WITH STRONG EMOTION

Those of us who minister to others should not be afraid of our strong emotions as we hear the stories of those who have been abused. These reactions, especially those of sorrow and anger, may well be indices of how God reacts to such horrors. The expression of such feelings can be healing for those who have been abused. They know that they have been heard, that someone has some sense of what it is like for them, that they are accepted. Moreover, the expression of such feelings of compassion for the survivor and anger at the abuser can help heal the wounded relationship with God and the church because they come from those who are representatives of God and of the church.

Ordinary church members can also be helpful if their responses are not controlled by fear. When fear controls us, it is easy to overlook the most basic and simple approaches. A number of survivors say that they have been hurt and confused when they went public about their

abuse because they found themselves shunned in their parish. One survivor, an active member of the parish council and a fraternal organization in the parish, was deeply saddened when no one from the parish called to ask how he was doing. Sometimes it is as basic as calling up and saying: "These past few months must be taking a toll on you — would you like to get together for a cup of coffee?" Even if the person turns you down, the fact that you cared enough to call and offer the invitation means a great deal. Or even, "I know that this has got to be very painful — if you need to talk, I'm ready when you are. I'm grateful to you for speaking out." Survivors of sexual abuse are our brothers and sisters who, like the man injured on the road, need the help of Good Samaritans, people who are willing to take the risk of stopping and offering a helping hand.

A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

When meeting with survivors of clergy sexual abuse it is important to ask the person questions to ensure that they feel the environment is safe. Often, survivors who have been abused in rectories or churches have intense memories that can be reactivated by the sight of religious objects or even by the faint smells of incense and candle wax. When suggesting a meeting place, ask if there is anything about the building or room that makes them feel uncomfortable. Ask them if they prefer that the door to the office or room be open. Indicate that you want them to feel safe, comfortable and in control of the setting. One survivor stated that it was important that he sit near the door; we presume that he wanted to have an escape route, something he probably did not have when he was abused. He added that, if the interview were with a male, he would have insisted that the door be left ajar.

It is obvious that physical contact must be well within appropriate boundaries. One survivor, anticipating an introduction to a priest, voiced the concern that it was anxiety-producing to shake his hand. However, after a trusting relationship has been established, we need to ask those abused about their comfort level with touches and other expressions of warmth. We should not presume that all such expressions are taboo. Such a presumption may be motivated by fear, the type of fear that would make the type of pastoral interventions Melissa Smith was finally able to receive from her priest unavailable. His ministry enabled her to receive the Sacrament of the Sick from him.

Crucifixes, statues, rosary beads and other religious objects have sometimes been profaned when they were used in concert with the abusive actions of the perpetrator. Rather than being a source of consolation they are a source of fear for the survivor. One of the most disturbing dimensions of the stories shared by survivors is the fre-

quency with which sacramental moments were an occasion of abuse. Confession, baptisms, First Holy Communion and the period immediately preceding or following Mass became moments of desecration. In the hearts of those abused by clergy these most sacred and transcendent actions have been contaminated by the evil of sexual abuse.

Many survivors have spoken of the deep longing they feel for the Eucharist, but they either become physically ill or filled with anxiety when they attempt to attend Mass. One man said, "Every Christmas I visit my Mother. I drive her to midnight Mass, and I so long to join her, but I drop her off and drive around for an hour. I can't tell her the reason because it would hurt her too much." Another woman survivor breaks out in hives and becomes nauseous when she approaches the church.

HEARING TO STORIES

We can help such people by hearing their stories and by telling them that they need only do what they can do for comfort. One could assure this last woman, for example, that it is not necessary for her to go to church while she is feeling this way. Then one could ask her where she feels comfortable with God, or if she feels comfortable with the world. If there is a place where she feels some comfort, she could be encouraged to go there and to ask God to help her overcome some of her fears of the church as a building. This woman may need to hear that she is not offending God by staying away from church, indeed, that God understands her nausea. Survivors of sexual abuse by clergy and many other important others have suffered a deep wound to their sense of basic trust in life and, often, in the Author of life. They will need careful tending to regain that basic trust. Good Samaritans for the long haul are needed.

The most fundamental and important gift that we can bring to survivors is our time, presence and willingness to listen. Absorbing with them the pain, humiliation, shame and anger is in itself life-affirming. Answers are not expected or desired. We become a companion and an ally in the healing process. An authentic relationship of mutual trust and caring can develop. The greatest antidote to the violations of humanity that survivors experienced are relationships based on unconditional caring and true friendship.

The impact of abuse often reaches into families and long-term relationships. Parents of victims of clergy sexual abuse carry heavy burdens because they believe that they placed their children in danger by encouraging them to be altar servers, choir members, etc. Again, reaching out to these family members with expressions of concern and support is vital. Parents have responded well to the opportunity to talk with other parents. Pastoral care providers can assist in facilitating such groups.

We can only encourage those who confide in us to do what is possible and to ask God for the grace that they really want at this time.

CARE IN HOMILIES AND TALKS

Sensitivity in preaching and a willingness to speak of these issues in a forthright and compassionate manner contribute to a parish culture that is no longer afraid of the secret of sexual abuse. While the focus is now on righting the terrible wrongs of clergy sexual abuse, the reality is that the majority of sexual abuse victims are violated by family members and others beside clergy. (See the article in this issue by Joseph Guido, O.P.) Once, when one of us spoke to a group of about sixty Catholic women on the topic of clergy sexual abuse, it quickly became evident, by the number of women weeping in the room, that there were many victims of sexual abuse present. The meeting was reoriented, and these women had a chance to speak of the wounds they carried as result of abuse by family members and others.

Those who give homilies and talks on theological and pastoral topics need to be aware of the number of people in their audience who may have been sexually abused by family members, friends of the family, clergy or members of religious congregations. We need to be sensitive to how our words will be heard by these survivors. Some explanations of suffering, for example, can make such survivors wonder about God. One hears it said that suffering is the result of sin. Such a statement might convince a survivor that his or her own sin caused the suffering. Sometimes one hears that God gives us suffering in order to increase our virtue. Imagine the effect of such a statement on a survivor. Sometimes one hears that our sufferings are necessary to atone for the sins of the world and of ourselves. Again, imagine the effect of such a statement on a survivor whose image of God as good is already quite tenuous. We need to listen to the stories of survivors of sexual abuse in order to imagine them as among our listeners and thus to couch our words so that our real message will be heard.

Also, we need to be careful of pressing the need of forgiveness on those who have been sexually abused. Admittedly, forgiveness is a Christian virtue. Jesus forgave his tormentors on the cross. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says, "So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go: first, be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift" (Mt 5:23-24). Jesus taught us to pray, "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us." We need to remember that forgiveness as a heartfelt sentiment cannot be willed. It may take years before someone who has been badly scarred by another human being can forgive that person, especially if the person shows no signs of remorse for what he or she has done. Jim Sullivan speaks eloquently of the difficulty of forgiving his parents as well as his abusers. "True forgiveness and healing are something that I have striven to attain for years, and I will continue my attempts at complete forgiveness. I recognize that holding on to my anger is self-defeating and debilitating." As we try to help survivors of sexual abuse, we need to remember that they know, as well as we do, what the scriptures say and may want to forgive from their hearts, but find that they cannot. One man who was abused by a relative is, by training and feeling, against the death penalty, but he cannot rid himself of the desire to have his abuser punished, even with the death penalty. He is not happy with this state of affairs. All he can do is ask God to help him to become more forgiving. Let us be careful of seeming to demand a rush to forgiveness. With time they may come to complete forgiveness, but that is in God's hands, not in ours.

For too many years the victims of clergy sexual abuse were invisible among us. On our journey to Jerusalem we were unwittingly passing them by. Now they have faces and names. The dark secret of clergy sexual abuse has been brought into the light. We recognize these men and women as our brothers and sisters. The men cry boys' tears, and the women weep the tears of little girls. The broken body of Christ cries out to be made whole. Let us follow the leadings of the heart of love and dare to take risks for the sake of Christ and his beloved ones. In the end we may just find that the victim/survivors have led the people of God into a place of great joy, peace and holiness of life.

We have been using the story of the Good Samaritan as the vehicle for our reflections on ways to be pastorally helpful to survivors of sexual abuse and their families. Perhaps we can end with another gospel story that may be pertinent to all of us in the church who have been impacted not only by the crisis of clergy sexual abuse but also by the dire situation of our world. In the gospel of Luke (24:13-35) we read of two disciples, perhaps a married couple who have lost all hope. They "had hoped" that Jesus was the promised Messiah, but with his cruel crucifixion those hopes had been dashed. Even though they had heard word of the empty tomb, they still had no hope. A crucified Messiah was a contradiction in terms for them. A stranger meets them on the road to Emmaus and proceeds to tell them the story of their people Israel in such a way that their hearts burn within them again, apparently without their full realization. They only recognize the stranger later in the day when he breaks bread for them. Then they realize that their hearts had been burning with hope as he told them the story that in some mysterious fashion the crucifixion of Jesus is the long-promised victory of God. They return in joy to the other disciples to announce their good news. We suggest that we contemplate this scene as individuals and as a people who may have lost hope or, at the least, become despondent because of the events of the past few years. Do we meet the stranger on our road? What story does he want to tell us in our dark hour? Perhaps we, too, will find our hearts burning with hope. The risen Jesus who appeared to the disciples on the road to Emmaus still had the marks of the crucifixion on his body. The past was not undone. But the crucifixion was not the end of the story, just the beginning. Perhaps we will hear a similar message in our dark hour.



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Trials of the Flesh

James Torrens, S.J.

All Flesh

Spirit inhabits flesh.
All flesh is grass
of hopeful green stuff woven
but its glory brief
in seasons of hot breath.

Spirit sets the bar high
has a firm purpose
wants to, would like to
but the flesh is weak
you can say that again
is weak
and the Word was made flesh.

The poor flesh
bruised and bruiser
cries to the Spirit "heal me"
and the son of man cries
you will stay you
unless you eat my flesh.

William Butler Yeats, the Irish poet, was astute about the moral climate after World War I. In *The Second Coming*, he wrote, "The ceremony of innocence is drowned." He was also prescient about our own times. His words certainly apply to the effects of the sexual revolution. Closer to home and within the Catholic Church, they apply to the sordid story of sexual abuse of minors.

Boston University, I am told, has a study under-way of people who have emerged relatively intact

from episodes of abuse when young. The study aims to learn what resources they found within themselves to keep up their self esteem and to fight off guilt — in other words, to keep from being destroyed by the experience. If sexual abuse or violence had happened to me, I am sure I would have been traumatized and deeply scarred by it. Because I grew up in a time when shame was attached to getting therapy, who knows what unspoken purgatory or hell I would have been plunged into.

All of the recent disclosures, the church's dirty laundry of a half century, raise a host of issues that remain foggy. One is the role of the media, especially the press. Beyond question, the press has brought the whole matter of Catholic clergy abuse to the fore. Our sins against innocence would still otherwise be festering. The press has done a great service. We can nonetheless chafe that its zeal has been stoked by anti-Catholic sentiment and complain that it has taken undue relish in beating the Catholic Church. These are unlovely motivations. But I must confess to having in the past taken not a little relish in exposés of misconduct among Mormons or evangelists or other doers of good from other communions, and now the chickens come home to roost.

A fog seems at times even to obscure what we are talking about. Pedophilia, that is, a serial predatory activity with children, stands distinct from an episode of sexual behavior with a teen-ager that is afterward confessed and regretted and not repeated. The former is monstrous. It is a product of moral insensitivity and big-time rationalization, as well as compulsions that defy understanding. The latter is a weak and sinful lapse. Its consequences are more restricted. It still, however, falls under the heading of felony, for there is a seriously aggrieved party. Any mature parent or teacher of high school can tell you why. A teen-ager may look as well formed and attractive as an adult, but inside there is still a teen-ager — a person of impulses

not under control, questions about identity and the meaning of life, insecurity and naiveté. The teen-ager is immensely vulnerable; the minister of religion has an aura, a sacred identity, which he can, alas, put on hold.

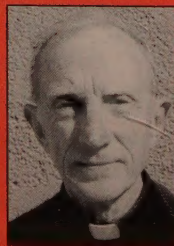
What a fallout there has been from the scandals. There are priests who are singled out, after a passage of years, for one culpable excess — for not having observed boundaries at some time early in their ministry, out of passion or loneliness — and who are yanked from a fruitful ministry, to the sadness and the regret of their parishioners. There are dubious accusations that throw some priests into instant limbo, side by side with those against whom the indicators weigh heavily. What can appear as the abrogation of a basic American principle — innocent until proved guilty — has driven a wedge between American priests and their bishops. The bishops, meanwhile, have their feet held to the fire by opinion makers, lawyers and spokesmen for victims. There are huge sums of money involved, which of themselves have no power to heal anyone, though they may be called for by the logic of restitution and the cost of therapy.

One unhappy effect of the close scrutiny of priests is the number of those who now say, "That's the end of my youth ministry." After all, much one-on-one attention is requisite in this ministry. And then there are the restraints on touch, especially with young children, who like and sometimes need to be hugged. Even a hand on the shoulder, a pat on the back has become verboten. When these physical expressions are dictated by some distorted ego-need of the minister, they can be serious boundary infractions ("trespasses" the "Our Father" calls them) and lead to terrible harm, but in themselves they happen to be normal means of encouragement and appreciation. At least that is what my Italian family background taught me.

Saint Mark gives us a helpful and essential piece to our puzzle. "And people were bringing children to

him that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this he became indignant and said to them, 'Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these'" (10:13-4). When I think of this, and the constraints put on everyone today by misconduct of those who, though a small percentage, add up to quite a few, it is difficult not to be angry. Jesus himself talked about the millstone being tied around their neck. But they, in their dank and driven world, or their desperate sorrow, cannot be just dismissed into the desert like expiatory goats.

In all of this we undergo the sorrows of the flesh. There was an era of tremendous naiveté about sexual attraction between men and women religious that is now the stuff of anecdotes and one day will be of history. To pin all the blame on celibacy for the Catholic scandals is to overlook something much more fundamental — the maturing process that is lifelong for most people and the fragile balance that responsible sexuality will always call for. Confessors know that the married and unmarried alike continually need the compassion of God in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the strengthening of God in the Holy Eucharist. It is the only way we frail beings, whatever vows we have or have not, can remain faithful.



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Bibliography: Recovery and Healing From Sexual Abuse

Gerard J. McGlone, S.J., Ph.D.

Bean, Barbara and Shari Bennett. *The Me Nobody Knows: A Guide for Teen Survivors*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1997.

This is a very practical and helpful book. While there is no one book that looks at clergy sexual abuse, this book has been helpful with the majority of victims that were abused as teenagers. It takes the complex issue and makes it methodically simple and readable.

Gil, Eliana. *Outgrowing the Pain Together: Partners, Friends, and Families of Abuse Victims*. New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1992.

A good resource for families and friends of abuse victims to cope with the healing process. It does not deal specifically with clergy abuse but would be a helpful template for survivors of this form of abuse.

Gil, Eliana. *Outgrowing the Pain*. New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1983.

A classic in the field. It is dated but points to the multiple aspects of a healing process for any survivor of abuse.

Gil, Eliana. *Someone in My Family Molested Children*. Rockville, MD: Launch Press, 1995.

A unique and very helpful resource for the secondary victims in the family. Religious communities — parishes, non-offending peers, fellow priests and/or religious — have often been called "secondary" victims. This book explains what it might be like for many of us.

Hansen, T. *A Secret That's Never Been Told: Healing the Wounds of Childhood Sexual Abuse*. Mystic, CT: Twenty Third Publications, 1993.

This is a small and dated book. Many clients who have been sexually abused have found it useful, but it is not specific to clergy abuse.

Mather, Cynthia L. *How Long Does it Hurt? A Guide to Recovering from Incest and Sexual Abuse for Teenagers, their Friends, and their Families*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1994.

This is quite comprehensive and helpful. It maps out a strategy for those abused as teens, both primary and secondary victims. It is not specific to clergy abuse, but the issues seem analogous to those that affect survivors of clergy sexual abuse.

McCarty, Robert J. *Protecting Young People: Our Sacred Trust*. Washington, DC: National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, 2002.

An excellent statement about the current crisis in the Roman Catholic Church and an action plan for parish communities to envision a system of safety. The plan might be critical as part of a mission statement for a parish or other community in this day and time.

McGlone, G., M. Shrader and L. Delgatto. *Creating Safe and Sacred Places: Identifying, Preventing, and Healing Sexual Abuse*. Saint Mary's Press: Winona, 2003.

This is the only pastoral and psychological resource of its kind. It is intended for educators, children and parents. This workbook tries to inform parish and high school communities about the signs of abuse, risk factors and prevention plans. It also gives concrete pastoral methods, session outlines and healing services to begin the process of healing in the Catholic context.

Padovani, Martin H. *Healing Wounded Emotions*. Mystic, CT: Twenty Third Publications, 1992.

This book takes the reader through the process necessary to face abuse in all of its forms in a simple, direct and effective way. Clergy abuse is subsumed within the general processes of healing from abuse. The book gives good spiritual insights.

Patton, John. "Forgiveness in Pastoral Care and Counseling," in *Forgiveness: Theory Research, and Practice*. Eds. M. McCullough, K. Pargament and C. Thoresen. New York: Guilford Press, pp. 281-298.

The author presents the latest thoughts on the timing and possibilities of forgiveness after abuse. Research is presented in a direct way so that the reader understands why and how forgiveness might be so difficult for some people. The book is quite helpful in looking at clergy abuse from this difficult pastoral perspective of forgiveness.

Yantzi, Mark. "Healing for Families and Churches from Past Sexual Abuse," in *The Challenge of Forgiveness*. Eds. A. Meier, & P. VanKatwyk. Ottawa, ON: St Paul University Press, 2001, pp. 269-296.

The author presents a solid model for a discussion and a healing process. The book is excellent in giving a real-life scenario for how healing might take place. The author also points out when it might not be appropriate to use this method. The book is not specific to clergy sexual abuse, but its ideas seem applicable to such survivors as well.

Following are some websites that I believe readers may find useful:

www.saferociety.org – the Safer Society Foundation

www.stopitnow.com/hope.html – Stop it Now (online stories of hope)

www.sidran.org – Sidran Institute

www.fvsvai.org – The Family Violence and Sexual Assault Institute

www.childhelp.org – Child Help USA

www.thelinkup.org – Linkup Organization (Clergy Abuse Survivors Group)

www.votf.org – Voice of the Faithful

<http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov> – National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information

Some further points: There are few resources specifically aimed at healing from sexual abuse by Roman Catholic clergy. The book by McGlone, Shrader and Delgatto is the only one that moves in this direction. We in the Roman Catholic Church are creating the healing that we need. It is very necessary, but we do not know a great deal about the unique facets of this healing.

Questions that have been unasked until now and that need answers are:

Are Roman Catholic survivors of clergy sexual abuse different from other survivors of sexual abuse? If so, how? What do these survivors need? What do their families, friends, loved ones need? What do the communities where the abuse occurred need? What do fellow pastoral ministers need? And what are the effects of this crisis on the vast majority of diocesan and religious priests, and religious brothers and sisters who have never offended in this way?



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